



Dragon

ISSUE 348 • OCTOBER 2006



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A CLASSIC D&D
VILLAIN RETURNS

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ECOLOGY OF THE
WIGHT

Dragon

VOL. XXXI NUMBER 5
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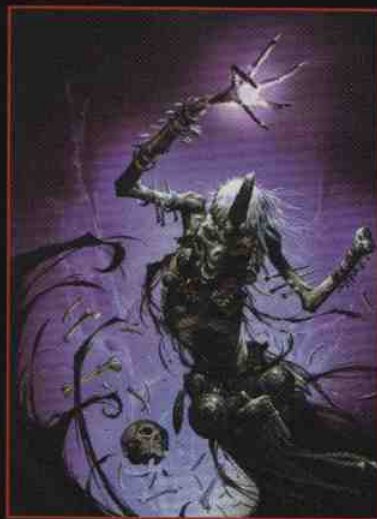
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2.0 MY GOSH

DUNGEON Editor-in-Chief James Jacobs and I share a passion for horror movies. Actually, it might be more exact to say that he has a passion and I just tag along for the ride. There's hardly been a month in the last three years where we haven't ended up watching something during which I've had to close my eyes.

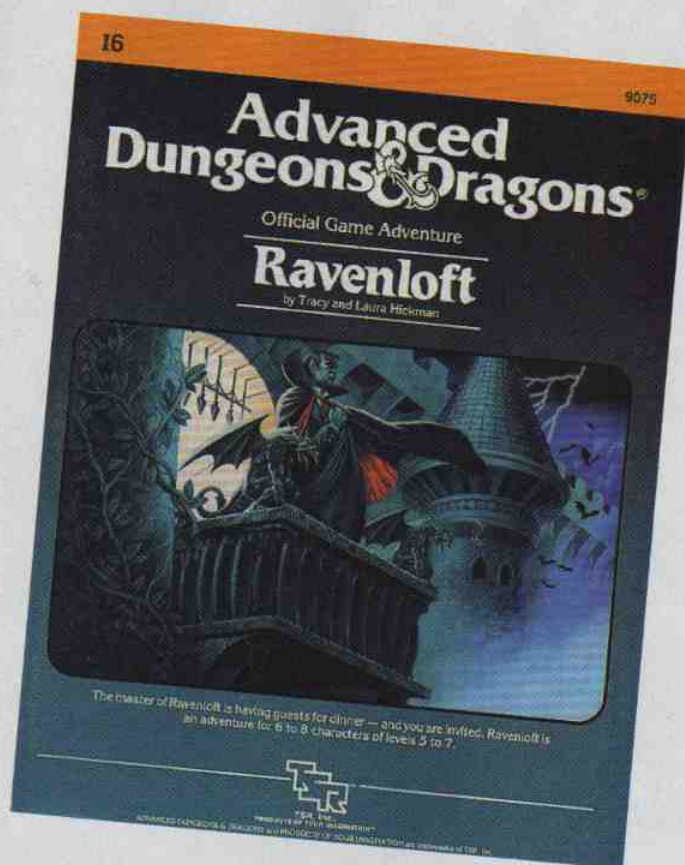
A few weeks back, the good doctor Jacobs and I took in the remake of 1976's *The Omen*. The prospect of seeing a remake typically does not leave me hopeful—having been burned by films like *Dracula*, *The Haunting*, or Roland Emmerich's *Godzilla*, in the past. Thus, I was pleasantly surprised when our after-movie discussion was largely positive. While probably not as good as the classic, we were both impressed by the respect with which the new version treated its predecessor, recreating some scenes almost frame for frame while tastefully making changes and thematically appropriate additions. Overall, the film didn't seem like director John Moore was trying to outdo the original, but rather that he wanted to recreate *The Omen* with the benefits of today's technology. Thus—although I hadn't wholly thought it possible—I walked away from the film with the realization that a remake can be cool.

A few days later, back here at the office, I ill-remembered my recent lesson when the text of *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft* hit my desk. I don't know if there's a word for the mixture of cautious enthusiasm that comes along with a remake of something you so fondly remember, but I was full of that. Paging through, I believe the first words that came to me were: "They made Madam Eva a what?!"

Shock! Surprise! A remake written twenty-three years after the original has—gasp—changes! Before I got a hold of myself I reflexively started scouring the document for even the most minute plot differences between it and my tattered blue copy of Tracy and Laura Hickman's original module.

Nostalgia is a powerful thing. Television series from *He-Man* to the *Muppet Show* live again on DVD, *Transformers* is gearing up to be the big... something of 2007, and even *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* are making a comeback. Both *DRAGON* and *DUNGEON* also love to play off of D&D's extensive lore, with *Maure Castle*, the *Savage Tide Adventure Path*, and yearly *Campaign Classics* issues being filled with blasts from D&D's past. But do I think any of these remakes and reissues are going to have the same impact I remember the originals having?

Doubtful. Short of bringing back countless lost action figures or the dice-strewn bar table in my parents' basement, none of these remakes and reinterpretations could ever be the formative experiences I remember. That's not to say they can't be cool, or even better than their forebearers, but it's



not just quality but also years of ruminating and remembering that makes something a classic.

Since my initial look, I've had time to read through this newest foray into RAVENLOFT more objectively and was pleasantly surprised at how much I was reminded of going to see *The Omen*. *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft* isn't a repeat, it's a remake of the module gathering dust in a place of honor on my shelf, and while the adventure has a fantastic sense of nostalgia it also does new things the original never could. It has much the same "new technology" feel, with things like the new encounter layout and using *Three Dragon Ante* cards as a fortune-telling device, both which I'm looking forward to trying. I'm also eager to play through a new story based in my favorite world, one where I don't know every encounter result and where the pages aren't turning yellow. At the same time, getting to use familiar old characters and rerunning memorable scenes promises a fantastic sense of déjà vu.

Do I think it's going to be a classic, though? We probably won't know for another twenty-three years. But already the signs seem pretty good.

F. Wesley Schneider

F. Wesley Schneider
Associate Editor
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SCALE MAIL

Tell us what you think of this issue. Send an email to scalemail@paizo.com. Please include your name, city, and state.



WE HAVE EERIE POWERS

When I woke up yesterday I didn't see any hole in my head, but when I got my latest *DRAGON* magazine I knew that you had sent a mind flayer to read my mind. How else do y'all do it? *DRAGON* #345 and #346 were just what the cleric ordered. I'll explain...

I had just finished book two of the "Dreaming Dark" series by Keith Baker, and had decided to have my 10th-level group explore the reaches of Xen'drik. Exploring ancient giant ruins, facing traps and drow, and basically surviving the untamed rainforests was just too easy of an opportunity to miss. Just as I made that decision, I received *DRAGON* #345 in the mail and now I have some drow as well as decent ideas for stuff to come across on Xen'drik, which has whet my appetite for *Secrets of Xen'drik*.

But before my players even got invited to protect a party of "scientists" on their way to Xen'drik, they were introduced to some of the houses of *EBERRON*. (Up until this point the group hadn't really done much character background except to pick a country they were from on Khorvaire.) The elf ninja was "invited" to meet with House Phiarlan and he had found out that his family was part of the house and he had no idea. He has become favored of the house and now adventures with the party to keep them alive and give the house eyes on Xen'drik. The halfling wizard in the group had an odd birthmark appear on her and was directed by her apprenticing master to seek

out House Ghallanda in the "District of Lights" (fashioned after Las Vegas) in Sharn. Accompanied by her centaur companion, they made it to the district only to be bombarded with slot machines and games of chance that overwhelmed the centaur barbarian, who essentially blew all his gold at the machines.

The centaur apparently has a bad gambling problem that leads to my second huzzah. *DRAGON* #346's article about games of chance! How did y'all know?! Now as my players and my NPC party of Tharashk "scientists" (who started off as a party of 10 and through traps and other such things has dwindled to 5, excluding the PCs) explore Xen'drik, I can keep the centaur occupied with games of chance from *DRAGON* #346 and have the party in search of giant artifacts from *DRAGON* #345.

Well done! Thanks again for the great articles and—especially with *DRAGON* #346—the awesome cover art!

Jason Webb
Ontario, CA

Wow! That sounds like quite a campaign, Jason. We're thrilled to help out in any way that we can. We put a lot of effort into delivering the most inspiring, most useful DUNGEONS & DRAGONS content we can, understanding that everyone's campaign is different and that all of our readers have unique tastes. When it comes to sure-fire hits, though, it's difficult to go wrong with drow and giants, and just about every D&D game I've ever played has involved games of chance. Sometimes things work out exactly

as we planned, and it doesn't always take a mind flayer (though it helps).

KEEP IT UP

I am a long time reader (since the low 100s), but I have never written to you guys. I have been inspired to voice my opinion. I'm sorry to say that I haven't gamed in about four years, yet I still subscribe to your magazine (keep the dream alive). There is very little I dislike about the magazine (and *DUNGEON*, although I only buy that magazine sporadically). I know that someone out there will like something you guys do, no matter what the rest of us think. Recently, I have been really excited about some things that the magazine has done for us fans. I really like the new Class Acts format, especially incorporating psionics into it. I like the preview of each issue on the website, but I like web enhancements even better. Issue #344's web enhancement made me feel giddy inside. I love more content.

I like supplemental material that goes along with what Wizards of the Coast puts out, like your recent article on vestiges, pertaining to the *Tome of Magic*. I really liked the articles you had that led up to the *Expanded Psionics Handbook* release. It was cool to see that material incorporated into *Complete Psionic*. Along with WotC's previews, excerpts, and web enhancements, I can make an informed decision on what my next purchase should be (my recreation funds are limited, and I have put *EBERRON* accessories first because it is a welcome departure from the *FORGOTTEN REALMS*).

Lastly, I like that you have decided to branch out from publishing magazines. I haven't gotten the *DRAGON Compendium* yet (it's high on my list, though). *The Shackled City* adventure book looks cool, especially with an unpublished adventure. I am more interested in new rules and such, but I would buy it.

Keep up the good work and keep giving us more. Of course, a bigger magazine would be great. It has been a long time since I worked in the publishing industry. Is it 8 or 16-page folds? An extra 16 pages for \$1-\$2 dollars more an issue (\$5-\$10 more for subscriptions) is reasonable.

Good luck you guys!

Justin Erickson
Via Email

Thanks for the kind wishes, Justin. We do sometimes increase the size of the magazine for a special event (like #344's anniversary issue), and the bump in page count occasionally results in a small increase to the cover price. It's a dicey proposition, however, and something we like to save for really special occasions.

We appreciate your interest in our non-magazine products. While lots of readers know about *The Shackled City Adventure Path* and the *DRAGON Compendium* (as well as the forthcoming *The Art of Dragon: 30 Year's of the World's Best Fantasy Art*), Paizo also produces a number of independent RPG accessories that—while not officially licensed *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* products—work perfectly with the system thanks to the Open Game License. Our *Compleat Encounters* packs include miniatures, map tiles, and adventures from some of your favorite game designers, and our *Map Packs* and *Item Packs* add new dimensions to any fantasy RPG. You can learn more about our *GameMastery* line at paizo.com.

ENERGY DRAIN FAN SPEAKS OUT!

I disagree with what a couple readers said about the fiction. I love the stories! Keep it up! The story on Gord was excellent. I actually would like to see less gaming stats. I would also like to see some more sexy maidens/wenches on the cover, please. (Maybe a hot

succubus. Would you... you know? I would!). I did say please. I don't really read *Class Acts* too much. There are a lot of people out there who love D&D like me, but never get to play in real games with people. Sadly, I don't know one person who wants to play D&D. I just play *Neverwinter Nights*, *Baldur's Gate*, etc. I love the mag, and I want to see more stories on Faerûnian cities. What about the *Borderlands*? Not much info out there on them. Oh yeah: on the Toon Disney channel, they are airing the impossible-to-find D&D cartoon on the weekends! Siiick!

Armen Clawson
Visalia, CA

Let me answer this one very carefully, in the form of a list.

1. While we will continue to publish top-quality fantasy fiction, readers should not expect a decrease in the amount of game content in *DRAGON* in the near (or even distant) future. The magazine's main focus is the paper and pencil *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* roleplaying game.

2. The easiest way to get into a face-to-face D&D game is to join the RPGA Network and get involved in local game days and conventions. These events give you an excellent chance to find local gamers who share your interests and play styles, and it's a great way to make new friends and find a new campaign. Give it a shot, and you'll be surprised how many gamers there are in your community. Learn more at wizards.com/rpga.

3. We have it on good authority that the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* cartoon is coming soon to DVD. Keep your eyes on *First Watch* for this developing story.

4. The truth of the matter—and this has been the case at least since the 1940s—is that covers featuring attractive women generally sell better than those that do not. I didn't believe it myself until I watched patterns over the course of most of the last decade, but there you have it. That said, we like monsters and male adventurers, too, so expect a good variety of cover images from the finest fantasy illustrators.

5. As for the succubus question, I probably wouldn't. Those things bestow negative levels, man. —Erik Mona

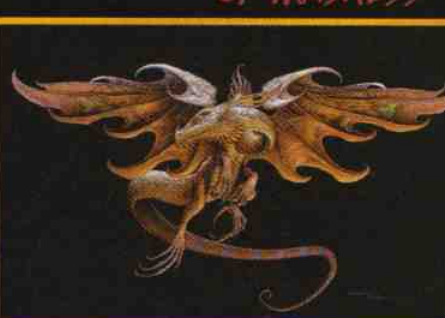
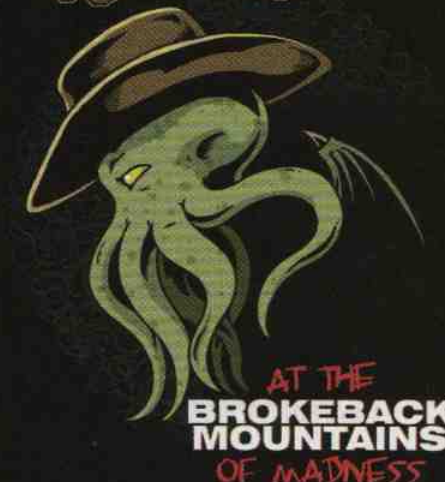
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GIRL GENIUS



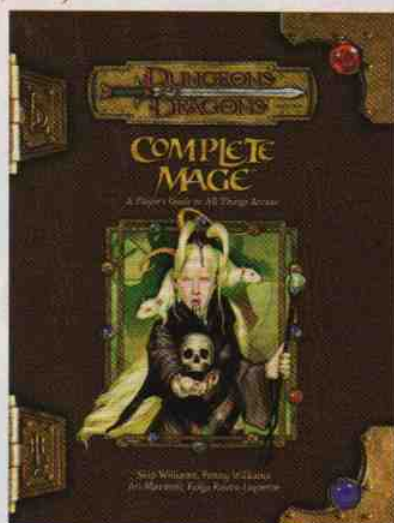
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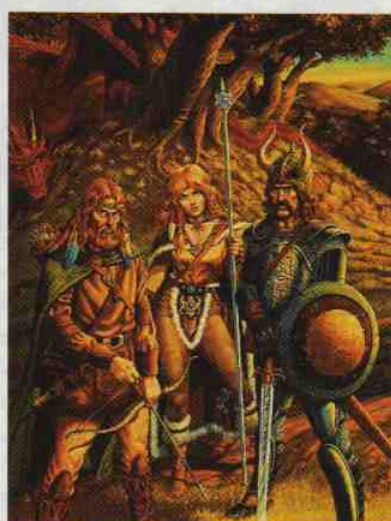
NEW RELEASES



From *Complete Arcane* to *Spell Compendium*, you can never have enough magic. *Complete Mage* presents a host of new options custom suited to spellcasters of any class. Along with new feats, warlock invocations, and advice on how to create encounters specially focused on magic-users, designers Skip Williams and Ari Marmell push the limits of the D&D magic system. One of the biggest additions are reserve feats, giving arcane spellcasters a special, at-will magical ability at the cost of unused spell-slots. Whether you're a 20th-level wizard or just adding a dash of arcane flavor to your rogue, as Williams says, "It's a little bit of magic for everybody."



The gothic horror and nightmarish adventure of Tracy and Laura Hickman's 1983 classic, *16: Ravenloft*, returns this month with the revised and expanded remake: *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft*. Besides an update to 3.5 rules, designers Bruce Cordell and James Wyatt have added dozens of new plot points and twists, along with many familiar characters and encounters. "We made the adventure really flexible," says Wyatt. "Want to run it as a long one-shot adventure to celebrate Halloween? No problem—we tell you which parts to use. Want a nice, meaty adventure, or a campaign that will last for months of real time? You can do that too."



Completing the set of collector's edition core rulebooks, the new *Special Edition Monster Manual* comes complete with sturdy, embossed leather binding, gilt-edged paper, all the most up-to-date errata from **wizards.com**, and a bookmark to keep your favorite beasts at your fingertips.

This month also debuts the *Special Edition Dragonlance Chronicles*, with all three volumes of Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman's fantasy epic compiled into one definitive tome. Pages of annotations reveal the thoughts of the authors and a behind-the-scenes look at the creation of a classic.

NEXT MONTH IN DRAGON #349

**Demonomicon of Iggwilv: Dagon**

by James Jacobs

Hear the song of the oracle of the Abyss. The ancient tentacles of Dagon, the Prince of the Depths, weave his alien will beneath the waves of innumerable worlds, tempting the foolish and depraved with the darkest secrets of all demonkind.

Complete Guide to Bows

by Eric Cagle

Master marksmanship and arrows aplenty with this definitive guide to weapons ranged and ruinous.

The Hordelands

by Edward Bonny, Brian Cortijo, and Laszlo Koller

Unleash one of the greatest threats ever to rage across the FORGOTTEN REALMS: The Horde. From the bleak steppes of the Endless Wastes to the barbarian city of Kourmira, discover the history, treasures, creatures, and ways of war of the brutal Hordelands.

Plus!

Ecology of the Ogre Mage, Bazaar of the Bizarre, Class Acts, Sage Advice, comics, and more!

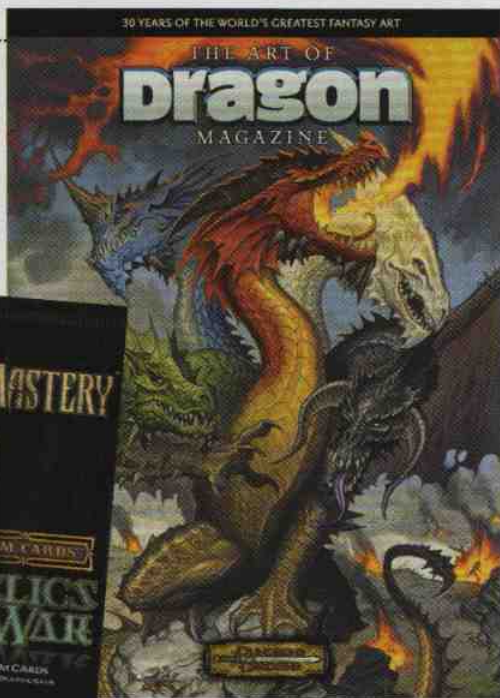
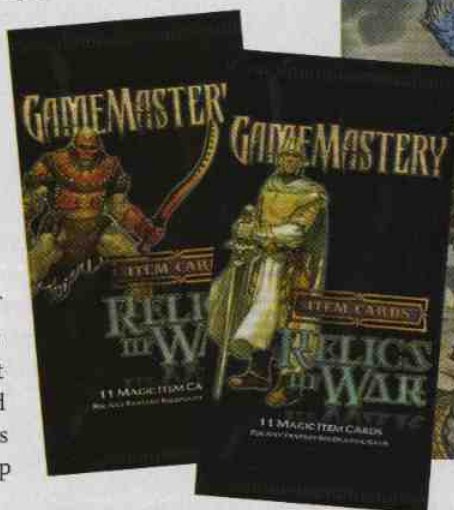
BAHAMUT TO QUEEN'S ROOK FIVE

Will Bahamut lead his metallic dragons to victory or will Tiamat and her chromatic dragons come to rule the world? Play out this endless struggle between good and evil with Wizards of the Coast's *Limited-Edition Chess Set*. With high-end resin cast pieces of all the most iconic D&D dragons, this artfully crafted set comes with an inlaid mahogany and dyed leather board etched with dragons in battle. Besides just chess, the set comes with rules for the variant *Dragon Rage*—a game as similar to chess as *Three Dragon Ante* is to poker. D&D brand manager Bill Slavicek explains that “*Dragon Rage* gives draconic abilities to some of your pieces just like in a D&D game.” These extra rules provide the ability to fly, use breath weapons, or rage, adding a whole new element of strategy to the game.

ART OF DRAGON

Filled with the greatest art to grace *DRAGON* magazine's 30-year history, Paizo Publishing's *Art of DRAGON* presents 160 pages of some of the most famous and formative images in *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* history. This hardcover includes works by such notables as Brom, Clyde Caldwell, Tony DiTerlizzi, Jeff Easley, Larry Elmore, Todd Lockwood, Keith Parkinson, Wayne Reynolds, and dozens more. Two versions of the book, the basic hardback and an individually numbered leather-bound limited edition, are available at paizo.com.

Also from Paizo comes a new set of GameMastery Item Cards: *Relics of War*. With more than a hundred cards in the set—each illustrated by artist Vincent Dutrait—every eleven-card booster pack contains ten regular cards as well as a special foil item card to help players and GMs manage their loot.



BLOOD WAR ON THE HORIZON

The millennia old, planes-spanning conflict spills over into the world of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* with set eleven: *Blood War*. A complete sixty-figure expansion, *Blood War* unleashes Lower Planar horrors—demons, devils, and worse—not just from the various *Monster Manuals*, but from the *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss*. Along with legions of planar champions to face down these fiendish armies, epic versions of some of the most famous and powerful personalities and villains in D&D, like Vlaakith the Lich Queen of the githyanki (see *DUNGEON* #100) or Storm Silverhand, also join the fray. On other fronts, new figures like the clear-plastic Living Flaming Sphere bring greater versatility to the game and might be

used either as devastating additions to a warband or as wandering spell effects. Find more about the upcoming set with Stephen Schubert's weekly *Blood War* preview at wizards.com/minis.



Soldier of Bytopia



Storm Silverhand



Succubus



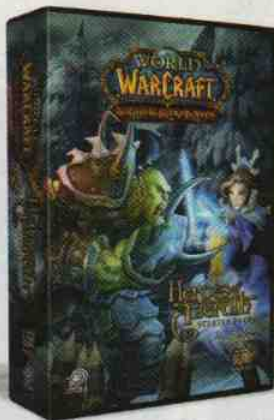
MAPS YOU'LL FLIP OVER

The two latest Flip-Mat scenes from Steel Sqwire (steelsqwire.com), *The City* and *The Dungeon*, take adventurers from tavern to subterranean terror. Each measures nearly 2 feet by 3 feet, and features a detailed adventure locale on one side and a grid of 1-inch squares on the other. "Our philosophy for the Flip-Mat derived from seeing the large tubes at conventions," says Jeff Peterson of Steel Sqwire. "The Flip-Mat was designed to fit in a notebook or backpack." Each map has a surface that, according to Peterson, "cannot be ruined," and can be drawn on with dry erase or permanent markers.



DARK CRUSADE

In the war-ravaged galactic reaches of the 41st millennium, seven deadly factions vie for control of one blood-soaked globe. This is the future of *Dawn of War: Dark Crusade*. An expansion for *Dawn of War*, the "2004 Real-Time Strategy Game of the Year," *Dark Crusade* allows you to take control of any one of seven armies from the grim fantasy of *Warhammer 40,000*, from zealous Space Marines to the life-scouring Necron. In time for this month's release, Relic Entertainment, THQ, Games Workshop, and DRAGON have a contest to help you take on all comers, both online and offline. See page 79 for more details.



THE ART OF WARCRAFT

Take your *Warcraft* addiction offline with Upper Deck's (upperdeck.com) new *World of Warcraft* trading card game, releasing this month. Among the basic cards, special Find Loot cards unlock cosmetic upgrades and resources for characters in the *World of Warcraft* online RPG. The card game is designed around the player-versus-player aspect of online play: pick a character class, gear up, and fight each other in a style of combat similar to its online cousin. Tired of dueling? Group up with multiple players to form a raid party and battle against the Deckmaster's incredibly challenging *Onyxia's Lair Raid Deck*.



NEW FROM TOY VAULT

"Klaatu verrata, necktie... nickel... it's an 'N' word, it's definitely an 'N' word!" The *Necronomicon* started as a fictional book of horrors and profane secrets from the works of H.P. Lovecraft, and we all loved it as the target of Ash's quest in *Army of Darkness*. Regardless of context, Toy Vault (toyvault.com) gives you the opportunity to possess your own book of the dead—complete with soft pages of incantations—in plush form by the end of the year. Also releasing for the holidays are plush versions of *Farscape*'s Rygel and Sir Didymus of *Labyrinth* fame.

THIS MONTH IN DUNGEON #139



There Is No Honor

by James Jacobs

Dungeon's new twelve-part *Savage Tide* Adventure Path begins, as a new band of heroes confronts exotic monsters, undead pirates, and a sinister guild of thieves ready to unleash a murderous coup. A *Savage Tide* Adventure Path scenario for 1st-level characters.

Sasserine

by James Jacobs

Discover the streets and canals of the city of Sasserine in this extensive backdrop. Includes a four-panel poster map.

Requiem of the Shadow Serpent

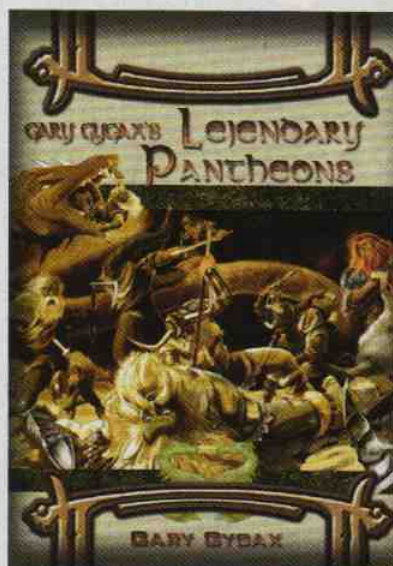
by Anson Caralya

Explore a warren of snake-haunted caverns where magic itself has lost its way and the faithful of Shar lurk in every corner. A *FORGOTTEN REALMS* adventure for 9th-level characters.

Maure Castle: The Greater Halls

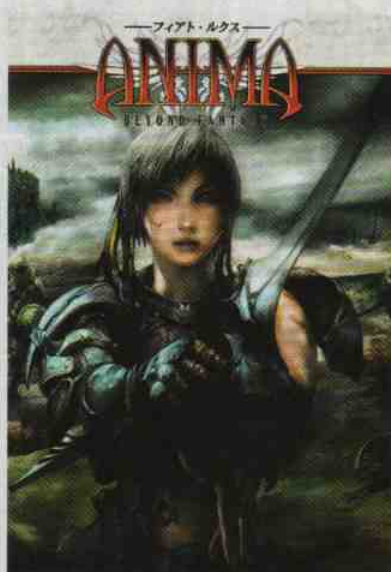
by Robert J. Kuntz

Return again to Maure Castle. What deadly menaces and fantastic treasures await within the infamous dungeon's Greater Halls? A *D&D* adventure for 17th-level characters.



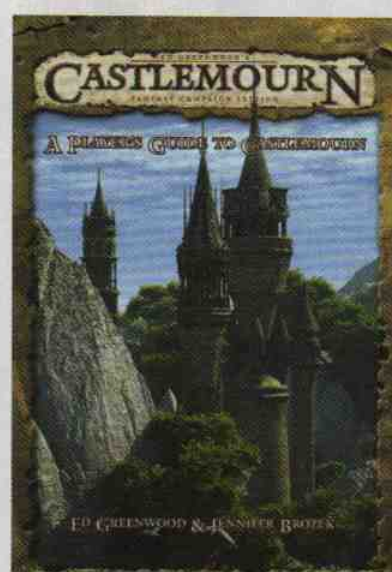
DIVINE INTERVENTION

Legendary Pantheons, from Troll Lord Games (trolllord.com) delves into the nature of gods and goddesses that make up the pantheons of *Legendary Earth*. "Deity types are placed into 15 ranks," says *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* co-creator and *Legendary Pantheons* author Gary Gygax. "At the minor deity level it is about impossible for any mortal to harm them, and above that, in the major and higher ranks, the most potent human is akin to a mosquito." With roots in real-world mythology, each pantheon can easily be used in any fantasy campaign, making this a valuable resource for any gamer or student of mythology.



ANIMA INSTINCTS

Inspired by anime and manga, the new *Anima* RPG features an original world loyal to the Japanese sagas that inspired it. "Gaia is a world which seems to be a normal one," says Carlos Garcia of Anima Project Studio (animarpg.com). "However, in the shadows, there are a lot of hidden powers, organizations, and entities." "(The) Production is gorgeous," adds Robert Vaughn of Fantasy Flight Games (fantasyflightgames.com)—the book's publisher—comparing its full-color, "anime-style" artwork to the popular *Final Fantasy* series of video games. Little wonder, considering several of the book's illustrators helped design next month's *Final Fantasy XII*.



GREENWOOD'S NEW REALM

Discover the secrets of the long lost land of Castlemourn, a new campaign setting from *FORGOTTEN REALMS* creator Ed Greenwood. In *Castlemourn*, the world itself has rebelled against its inhabitants. Much magical knowledge has been lost and powerful spells remain exceedingly rare. Thus, the quest to regain lost legacies and tame the beasts of an angry land forms the core of many adventures. While the flavor is pure Greenwood, the look comes from Donato Giancola, a Hugo-nominated artist. While Gen Con saw the release of a 32-page teaser book, the core book releases this month. Get more details about *Castlemourn* at sovpres.com.

RPGA REPORT by Ian Richards



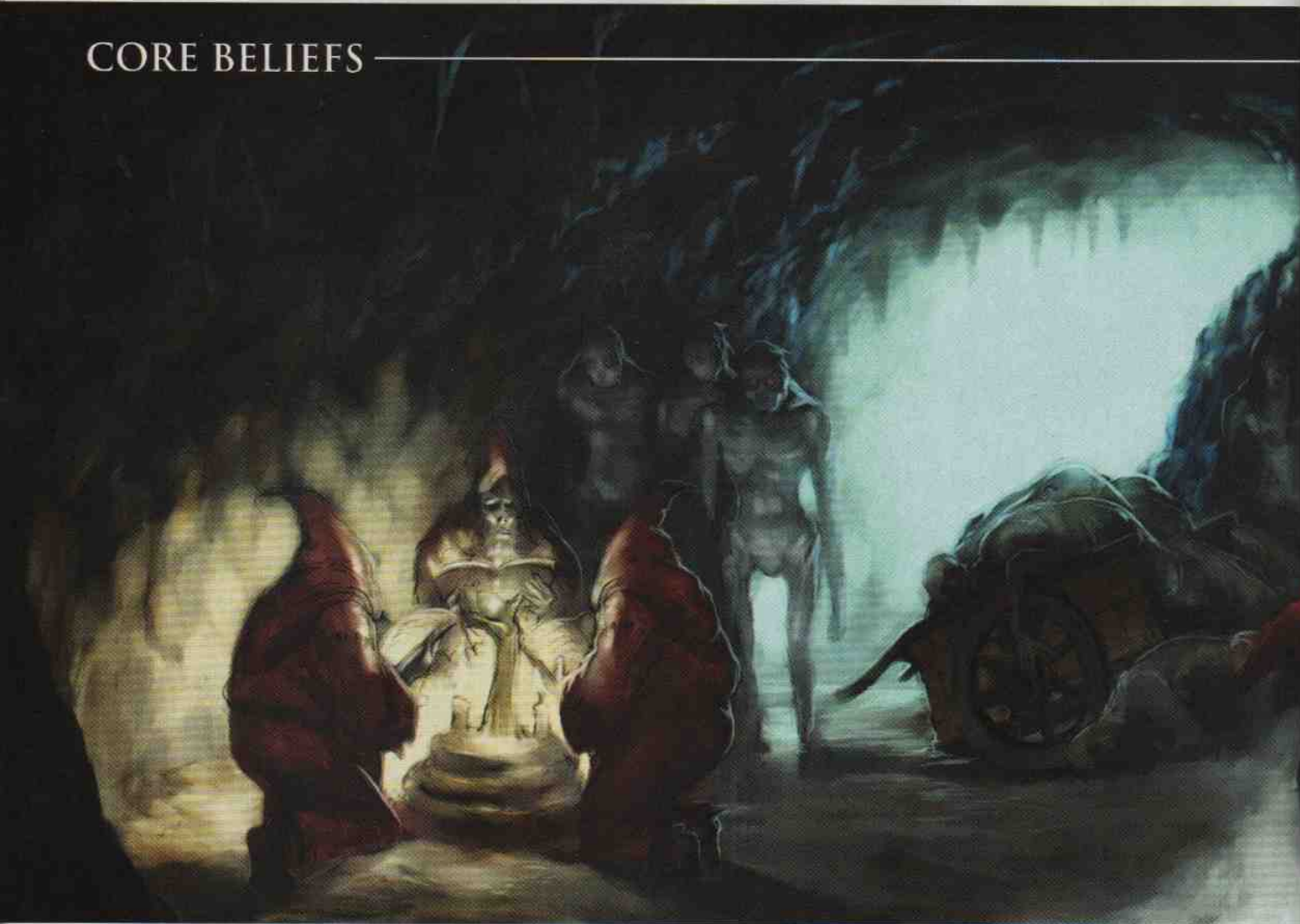
I write this month's update with sad news and good wishes. Since I arrived in the USA to head the RPGA, one person has worked like a kind of demigod for the organization. His help, insight, and creative solutions have improved all of our programs. He's shared and advanced our vision to provide as many high-quality, exciting, and fun D&D experiences as we could to players across the globe. Under his stewardship the *LIVING GREYHAWK* campaign has flourished and grown to titanic proportions. He's been the leading light on the successful RPGA

Cycling Campaigns, developing projects like *Mark of Heroes* and the new *Xen'Drik Expeditions*, while helping to bring a new Organized Play Program to stores and players every month. His biggest contributions, though, were that he worked tirelessly, constantly challenged my hare-brained ideas, and has been a fantastic friend.

So who was this hero? Sadly, I have to announce that, after his six-year tenure, Content Manager Stephen Radney-MacFarland is leaving the RPGA for newer and bigger challenges. While we all wish Stephen the absolute best,

that does leave the question of what happens now at RPGA Headquarters? Although Stephen will be impossible to replace, even now we're searching for the best and brightest candidates to take up the banner as the RPGA's next Content Manager. With any luck it shouldn't be long before we'll have an announcement all about the changes and additions happening here at the RPGA.

Until next time, though, the entire RPGA wishes Stephen the best in all his upcoming endeavors, and good gaming! 🎲



VECHA



BY SEAN K REYNOLDS AND SAMUEL D. WEISS
illustrated by Andrew Hou • cartography by Christopher West



Vecna is the secret whispered in the dark, the deathbed confession that topples an empire, the lost spell fragment that can shackle the mortal races forever. As the god of destructive and evil secrets, he waits in hidden places, unearthing dark knowledge and horrible, long-buried things to further his goals of taking the world for his own. And from there all worlds and planes of existence. A thousand years ago he ruled as a lich but was betrayed in a moment of crisis by his vampire lieutenant, Kas. Long thought destroyed, but still feared more than any living being, he nurtured his legacy with artifacts formed of his own hand and eye. Only in recent times has he achieved godhood, giving him limitless fuel for his ambition: his desire to dominate all things. Mortals fear to speak his name, and even the gods are cautious in dealing with the Arch-Lich. Long used to immortality, Vecna is never rash in his plans, every detail calculated to his advantage. The Maimed Lord knows every secret and he plans to use each in turn until all of creation bows before him.

Every historical mention of Vecna speaks of him as a lich, as little is known of his time as a mortal. He likely used a different name or altered his identity to prevent others from learning of his mortal years. As an undying king he ruled a land ranging from the Sheldomar Valley the north-west shores of the Nyr Dyv, although his immediate reach was only the land near his stronghold, called the Rotted Tower in the Rushmoors. From his Spidered Throne, Vecna studied secrets, researched ancient lore, and practiced necromancy to increase his power. The lich committed horrible evils, exploiting the lives of those unfortunate enough to live under his rule. It is said he sacrificed entire villages of his own people just to fuel the magic of a single spell. Vecna's rule ended when his vampiric lieutenant, Kas, betrayed him. Following the whispered advice of the sword his master had made him, Kas cut off Vecna's hand, provoking a battle that seemingly destroyed them both, leaving three artifacts behind to be found many years later: Vecna's hand, his eye, and his lieutenant's treacherous sword.

Centuries passed and the artifacts traveled from land to land, sowing evil wherever they went. Although his mortal realm was broken, Vecna's name still carried a dread weight, and a cult of fear grew about him. Some sought his artifacts for their power, others thought they were the keys to finding Vecna himself, and a few even wished only to worship his greatness in the hopes he would teach them. All these things fed Vecna, hidden all this time, carefully weaving a plan to bring himself back to the mortal world. He eventually succeeded, obtaining a foothold on divinity. This power came at a price, however, and he was imprisoned for a time in an extraplanar realm. Vecna eventually freed himself and used the renewed vigor of his cult to further elevate himself as a god. Now he plots against his old enemies, seeking ways to undermine their power or

THE BASICS

Vecna is a neutral evil deity and his clerics are neutral evil (the majority), lawful evil (the larger minority), or chaotic evil (very few). His holy symbol is a left hand clutching an eye, although when discretion or speed is required it is sometimes rendered as a circle drawn over a fan-spray of five lines or even a handprint over a circle. His church has no official colors, although gray, black, and drab brown are in common use. He has no associated sacred animal, not even a steed. He is served by intelligent and mindless undead, some of which are unique creations or personal designs. His epithets and titles include the Arch-Lich, the Maimed Lord, Master of the Spidered Throne, and the Whispered One. His home is an unknown plane, although he at one time had a massive skull-shaped stronghold on the Plane of Ash called Cavitus. This secrecy allows him to work undisturbed and protects him from other deities who would attempt to eradicate him. His portfolio is destructive and evil secrets. His domains are Evil, Knowledge, and Magic. His favored weapon is the dagger.

HOLY TEXTS

The cult of Vecna has few texts of their own, as keeping their own secrets is as important to them as uncovering the secrets of others. Further, what they consider most inspiring are the darkest secrets of others, not mere platitudes reminding them to seek such. The following texts have significant status within the cult of Vecna, and those who gain access to them are considered exceptionally fortunate.

The Book of Keeping: A tome of true evil, this book contains information on summoning and controlling fiends, specifically yugoloths. Purportedly written by a great yugoloth for the purpose of tempting mortals to bind demons beyond their ability to control, the book contains the descriptions and secret names of many types of lower planar denizens, including some unique individuals. A later version by a demodand called Xideous is more common, with copies spread across the planes containing "corrections" to the original. Both versions contain deliberate errors intended to doom mortals who think they can control the greatest fiends, but the cult of Vecna has a secret document listing these errors with additional notes on some of the unique fiends and their preferred bribes.

The Book of Vile Darkness: Vecna himself is said to have had a hand in creating this lesser artifact. The book is an abomination, containing the recorded experiences of several unnamed individuals in studies so unspeakable the mere reading of it can corrupt those of good heart. For those who have already turned to darkness, the book is an invaluable source of information on the rites and rituals of foul deities, vile magics, and damnable secrets. Any Vecnate cultist who bears the book gains much status within the faith.

render them helpless against him, ever seeking ways to seize control of all of Oerth, and then other worlds, and then the multiverse itself.

Vecna is a god of knowledge, but he favors secret knowledge. Secrets have power, if only because they are lost or a person deliberately did not want them to be found. Discovering a lost secret is valuable because it is something

hidden from others, which puts those who know at an advantage—either in using the knowledge or being able to destroy it. While a lost lich-destroying spell might seem less valuable to Vecna than a lost paladin-killing spell, by securing its last existing copy he assures that none can employ it against him, while simultaneously using it to threaten competitors and



rivals. Discovering a deliberate secret gives one power over another, for the threat of revealing the secret can extort information, force service, or even destroy. Essentially, secrets are power, and Vecna craves nothing less than total power.

Vecna's cult remained incredibly secret for many generations, often with no more than a handful of individuals meeting over the course of a year. Now that he has ascended to true godhood, his followers are a bit bolder, although still cautious, as their god's agenda puts them at odds with every other faith. In small communities and remote areas, the cult might act more openly, using fear and blackmail to keep the common folk in line, while in larger settlements they remain quiet, communicating in codes and symbols drawn on doors or muttered in dark alleys.

While some seek the cult willingly, many who join the faith do so because another cultist knows some damning secret about them and the only way to mitigate it is through service or by learning a similar secret about their tormentor. A typical cult cell or temple is a web of connected secrets, with constant threats to reveal or exploit knowledge about each other.

This results in an odd sort of quiet tension as cultists agree to work together peaceably to advance the goals of the cult without fear of assassination or treachery, thanks to contingent plans to reveal secrets in the event of an unexpected demise. Furthermore, while a living person can keep a secret, a dead one is vulnerable to *Speak with Dead*, so it is a cultist's best interest to protect the person who knows his secret. Finally, as their god was once a lich, some cultists join the faith in the hopes of becoming undead after they die. The result of

these connections and beliefs is that Vecna's cultists are not inclined to sell out each other, but neither are they recklessly suicidal. Vecna's cults work together in the face of danger, unlike many chaos-cults or death-cults.

Vecna is depicted as a withered lich with a missing eye and left hand. His raiment varies in each depiction without a consistent theme other than power. Although shown crippled, Vecna is capable of manifesting as whole or maimed and his worshipers contest that depicting him sans eye and hand represents not only his ability to act in multiple places at once, but the secret nature of what evil his missing parts might be fomenting.

Vecna's church focuses its efforts on acquiring secrets (and thus power), which it hopes to use to bring about Vecna's dominion. While his church does not pursue evil for its own sake, if there is a secret or power to be gained by an evil act then such an act is necessary. Given its clandestine nature, his church rarely forms armies, preferring to work from the shadows or hidden strongholds where its members can research and plot. It is not, however, above using its knowledge to manipulate others' armies to serve its goals, such as eliminating an enemy. The church has a surprising amount of money acquired from blackmail and extortion, as small amounts from many people add up, often from those who have no idea of their payments true destination. Sometimes, Vecna's followers take over a vacant or thinly populated church of another religion, then set up operations in the name of the previous faith, using the community's trust to find out information they can later exploit.

Vecna's favored weapon is the dagger, as it is small and concealable. Some worshipers even have daggers with the power to make them undetectable to mundane searches. Clerics and wizards are also likely to use staves (often disguised to look

completely mundane). The cult has no overall favoritism for or against any other kind of weapon; even long-swords bear no stigma (the *Sword of Kas* is a longsword). Some worshipers wear a black glove on the left hand to represent Vecna's lost limb, while a few fringe cultists cut off that hand and pluck out one eye to show their devotion. This mutilation is not necessary and is usually discouraged as too obvious.

Prayer services to Vecna are simple, as his devout would rather not waste time in ritual when they could be doing real work. Ceremonies open with the Sacred Chant (see the Aphorisms sidebar), followed by words from the senior cultist appropriate to the occasion, verbal announcement of any secrets that all present should know, and the Sacred Chant again. Magical rituals and ceremonies are as long and complex as needed.

A CLERIC'S ROLE

Clerics of Vecna's church spearhead work toward the faith's overall goal: acquiring secrets that can be used to gain power and leverage Vecna's dominion over all things. Different aspects of this goal include magical research on spells and items, learning damnable things about persons of power, and questing to discover lost items or places of interest. As the primary source of healing in any cult cell, they are responsible for looking after the other cell members' well-being, but this is not a motherly sort of attention—they merely want everyone in their cell to remain healthy so the entire group can fulfill its plans. A cleric of Vecna doesn't withhold healing as a punishment or demand payment for services any more than one of his fighters demands payment before intercepting a charging paladin. As described earlier, cult members are intertwined in a web of blackmail that forces them to protect each other.

As the best users of negative energy, Vecna's clerics are also responsible for creating undead to serve the

cult, including creating new types or finding creative ways to take advantage of an existing undead's abilities. A cleric who learns the Craft Wondrous Item feat might request the knowledge of how to craft a phylactery from a planar servant of Vecna. This request is always honored, and clerics are required to explain the process to other spellcasters of the faith if they so ask (although payment or service is required). The church also has a simpler method for creating a "lesser phylactery," useable by nonspellcasters who wish to become undead. Although the exact details of this are unknown, sages suspect these "lesser lichs" have all the standard abilities of the undead type, a life-force tied to a phylactery, and the ability to reform after a few weeks' time if destroyed, but no other lichlike powers. A well-established and wealthy cell might have many such lesser lichs, making the cell very hard to stamp out.

The daily tasks of a cleric of Vecna change based on the needs of the cell. One day, he might be required to eavesdrop on an important meeting, the next, he might craft items or research a spell, while on the third he looks for corpses to create undead. This applies to clerics of any level: senior members of the faith must sometimes use their abilities in the best way to serve the cell, even if this means a venerable cleric must disguise himself as a beggar outside an important guildmaster's meeting. When one of the legendary artifacts of Vecna, either the hand or eye, is in the area, cell members are likely to focus on acquiring these items. Only if cultists have been told (such as by another cell or a Vecnate messenger) that the artifacts must remain "in play" do they refrain from this activity. Similarly, news of the *Sword of Kas* perks their interest, for they have a ritual to temporarily banish it from Oerth, gaining great power in the process.

Vecnate clerics are well-versed in Spellcraft, arcane Knowledge, and religious Knowledge (both for its

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direct application to their faith and for its utility regarding undead). Most also hone their Gather Information and Sense Motive skills to better learn secrets both from unsuspecting marks and other cultists. Many have ranks in Bluff and Perform (acting) to help them assume friendly-seeming roles in society and hide their true goals.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER CORE RELIGIONS

Just as his followers are despised by all others, so is Vecna despised by all other deities, who view him as a reckless newcomer. They are fully aware of his attempts to supplant them in the past, and they hold little interest in entertaining his continued existence. Vecna returns the feeling, loathing all other deities and seeking the secrets to their destruction as part of his quest for dominance. Naturally, certain deities of evil are still willing to make the occasional alliance of convenience, trading what they consider irrelevant trivia for critical information, and deluding themselves into believing they are the ones benefiting from the transaction. The one exception is the demigod Iuz, who has twice been involved in Vecna's ascension schemes, the second time being absorbed by Vecna for a time. The hatred Iuz feels for Vecna exceeds that which he feels for any other, and at his command his followers oppose those of Vecna's at all costs.

A MAGE'S ROLE

Because of his history as a wizard-lich and his interest in secret magic, Vecna is a popular deity for evil sorcerers and wizards, particularly those specializing in necromancy. Vecnate wizards have overlapping duties with clerics, although they have less to do with infiltration and spying, instead using their talents for research and exploration. Arcane spellcasters play a critical role in analyzing magic items discovered by the church and using

APHORISMS

The everyday sayings and adages of Vecna's faithful tell a great deal about their beliefs and morals. The samples here represent the many sayings common to clerics of Vecna. Unlike other faiths, the clerics of Vecna are loath to explain their sayings, leaving the uninformed to wonder as to their meaning.

The Sacred Chant. This simple chant is spoken at the start and end of any religious service to Vecna and is sometimes used as a calming ritual. New members of the cult are sometimes forced to chant it for hours until they enter a hypnotic state. Minor transgressions against the faith might be forgiven by repeating the chant as a penance, or scribing the words into a book over and over with one's own blood. The words are "Vecna guide us. We whisper your name. We seek the knowledge. We find the secrets. For power, for Oerth, for your will, for your rule. In the name of the Hand and the Eye, we open our minds to you."

Secrets Never Die. This is both a promise and a warning. The promise is that if a secret exists, it can be found and exploited. Even if the secret is supposedly destroyed, there is someone somewhere, alive or dead, who knew it, and it can be learned again. In other words, there is always the opportunity to discover a secret; it just might take more work. Conversely, this is a warning, as you can never fully bury a secret you wish to remain hidden. There is always the chance that someone might unearth it and use it. Even killing those who know it does not work, as magic foils the silence of death in many ways. This phrase is often used in messages to those being blackmailed as a reminder that they can never escape their past.

enchantment magic to convince outsiders to help them or gain information. Wizards, with their easy access to item creation feats, are tasked with keeping cells supplied with minor magic items; a cult cell with a wizard usually has many potions in the hands of the faithful. Many arcane spellcasters who join the cult trade their services for learning the cult's formula for lichdom. Although some join the church for personal gain and only pay lip service to the Whispered One, interaction and investigation with other members of the faith invariably result in the arcane spellcaster getting caught in the same web as everyone else in the cult, preventing any escape.

A CLERIC-MAGE'S ROLE

Multiclassed cleric/sorcerers or cleric/wizards hold a special place within the cult. Although they fall behind on the most powerful spells available to a single-classed character, the breadth of spells available to them is much greater.

This versatility makes them valuable, for they can fill either role or even take the place of two cultists under certain circumstances. While these individuals rarely become cell leaders, they usually find themselves placed as valued lieutenants or seconds-in-command. Most such casters have the Magic domain to boost their effective arcane level. They otherwise share the functions of both their classes.

HOLIDAYS

Vecna does not require much in the way of ceremony from his followers. Their successes in serving him matters more than any hollow ritual of submission. When serving Vecna, results are more important than mere words.

Mockery of the Betrayer: Although a ritual in memory of the betrayal by Kas might seem bizarre, to the cult it celebrates Vecna's ascension to godhood. The name of the ritual is meant to demonstrate that everyone and everything serves Vecna, no matter what one might plan. His

TEMPLE OF VECNA



followers mark the anniversary with a wild celebration, praising Vecna for transcending death and heaping scorn on Kas for thinking he could supplant his master. The highlight of the event is the sacrifice of a sentient creature representing Kas, whose essence is captured and offered up to Vecna. On the rare occasion when an actual traitor to the cult is available to be sacrificed, the rites take on a special fervor and the torments inflicted on the victim are unimaginable by civilized folk.

Challenge of Secrets: When tensions between two members threaten to erupt into open violence, their superiors might order this ritual to limit the damage. In a very convoluted process, the two cultists reveal secrets they have acquired before the assembled congregation, who judges which are of more worth to the group as a whole. The involved parties might choose to reveal secrets about their judges, and sometimes

just the threat of this is enough to force a quick judgment and end the contest to prevent too much from being revealed.

The Making: Cultists use this ritual to create two monstrous construct creatures, called the Hand and the Eye, and can only do so under certain planar and celestial conjunctions and the direct intervention of Vecna. The Hand is a Large construct, tall and muscular, made entirely from severed hands. It wields a pair of swords in combat and grapples with a giant-sized head-hand, drawing the strength out of its target. The Eye is a stretched-looking Large construct, made from hundreds of eyes plucked from living victims. The Eye wields two daggers with incredible speed and its large head-eye draws the life force out of its opponents. Both creatures are made by mutilating humanoid creatures and they are only loyal to the clerics of the cult

that created them. Creating these constructs represents a great victory for the cultists and evidence of their power and Vecna's favor.

THREE MYTHS

Hundreds of myths concern Vecna, of which only a fraction are true. Identifying false myths is sometimes used as a test for junior members of the faith. The following myths are generally considered to be true.

The Betrayal: This dark legend of Vecna's betrayal by Kas is well known and instills in the faithful a healthy level of suspicion concerning allies and minions. This keeps them safe from simple deceptions and encourages them to be more careful in their scrutiny of others—which lends itself to learning greater secrets.

The Tamed God: This story tells of how Vecna the lich learned a great secret about a godling and used that secret to extort knowl-

edge and power from that being. The exact secret is unknown but is presumed to be some blasphemous truth about the godling's origin or apotheosis; likewise, the deity's identity is unknown and he or she might be dead. The faithful believe that Vecna used this relationship to lay the groundwork for his own ascension to godhood. This story teaches that even the mightiest beings have secrets with which mortals might lay them low.

A Whisper of Fear: For centuries, Vecna remained absent from the Material Plane, acting only through his artifacts. Despite this, mortals and deities feared him—what he might be doing and his plans should he return—and spoke his name only in whispers. Many who might normally oppose his cult chose to avoid it entirely for fear of drawing Vecna's attention. The cult uses this myth to teach that even the hint of a thing can have power and that what a person believes you might know can be more detrimental than your actual knowledge.

PRESTIGE CLASS SUGGESTIONS

Vecna's followers pursue prestige classes that allow them to specialize in various areas of knowledge or magic. Cleric/wizards usually become mystic theurges (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, 192). For those who favor uncovering secrets over spellcasting ability, fleshwarper (*Lords of Madness*, 189) and loremaster (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, 191) are both attractive options. For those of the highest levels, hierophant (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, 188) and archmage (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, 178) offer magical secrets available to few. In campaigns that use the rules for taint, tainted scholar (*Heroes of Horror*, 113) is an almost inevitable path for arcane casters. Nonspellcasters often become spymasters (*Complete Adventurer*, 76) or warriors of darkness (*Book of Vile Darkness*, 75, mature audiences only).

THE HAND AND THE EYE

These two golems use the basic statistics for a flesh golem, with the following adjustments.

The Hand: Replace each slam attack with a Large longsword attack, +10 melee, dealing 2d6+5 damage each. Add a third attack from the head hand. Treat this as a slam attack, +5 melee, dealing 1d8+2 damage. In addition, this slam attack has improved grab and makes a grapple attempt as a free action with a successful hit. The head hand deals 1d4 points of Strength damage each round with a successful grapple check.

The Eye: Replace each slam attack with 2 Large daggers attacks, +10/+5 melee, dealing 1d6+5 damage each. This golem also has a gaze attack dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage, with a range of 30 feet. A DC 14 Fortitude save negates the effect. The save DC is Charisma-based and includes a +4 racial bonus.



RELICS OF THE FAITH

Few faiths are associated so intimately with specific relics. While Vecna's personal relics and the *Sword of Kas* are the most significant (see chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), the following items are of lesser power but still of special value to the cult.

Fragments of Vecna: Numerous other pieces of Vecna's body have surfaced over the years, each with significant powers. While not true artifacts, these bits of mummified flesh have the power to corrupt those who wear them, while giving them resistance to magic and unholy powers. Rumors hold that some of the fingers from his right hand, his teeth, one of his feet, his heart, and possibly even his head still linger, waiting to be found and attached by the power hungry.

Tome of Shared Secrets: A lesser artifact devised to gather information, this is a book of modest size, appearing as a simple illustrated bestiary. If a reader slices open his hand and places it on a creature's page, he gains a +4 competence bonus on attack rolls, skill checks, and saving throws against creatures of that kind (such as "green dragons," "pit fiends," or "vampires") for six days. Each time the book's power is used in this way it drains 1 point of Constitution. Restoring this loss before the duration of the bonus expires causes the bonus to end prematurely. A reader reduced to 0 Constitution in this manner dies, his soul goes to Vecna, and his body animates as a mindless zombie.

Rod of the Whispered One: This rod of bone and metal looks like a skeletal human hand clutching a sphere of swirled iron and gold. Designed to allow Vecna's lieutenants to maintain order while he was away from his throne, it functions as a *rod of rulership* (DC 20) and once per day can be used as a *crystal ball* (up to 10 minutes scrying, DC 20 to resist). When used to scry, all clerics of Vecna within 10 miles are aware of it (as well as Vecna himself, regardless of distance or planar boundaries), and any scrying attempts against the user are automatically successful (as if he had failed his saving

throw against the scry). Vecna's cultists have a ritual of human sacrifice that allows them to restore spent charges from the rulership ability; even when the available uses of the ability are spent it remains a viable scrying device (it does not crumble to dust like a typical *rod of rulership*).

NEW DIVINE SPELLS

The roles of Vecna's faith teem with spellcasters of all sorts, seeking the hidden knowledge that the Maimed Lord possesses. The following spells represent just a small sample of the lore a cell might hold.

Skeletal Hand

Necromancy

Level: Cleric 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: Disembodied skeletal limb

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

A disembodied skeletal arm and claw appears and moves as you desire, allowing you to attack and deliver touch spells at a distance. The skeletal appendage deals 1d6 points of slashing damage per hit, +1 point per three caster levels (maximum +5 at 15th level). In addition, any touch spell of 6th level or lower that you cast can be channeled through the *skeletal hand* rather than through your own. The hand can attack to discharge the touch spell in lieu of its regular attacks for the round. The limb is corporeal and can be harmed by any normal weapon or effect. It has improved evasion (half damage on a failed Reflex save and no damage on a successful save), your save bonuses, and a base AC of 12. Your Intelligence modifier applies to the hand's AC as if it were the hand's Dexterity modifier. The hand has hit points equal to 5 + half your caster level.

Upon appearing, the *skeletal hand* strikes the opponent you designate,

starting with one attack in the round the spell is cast and continuing each round thereafter on your turn. It uses your base attack bonus (possibly allowing it multiple attacks per round in subsequent rounds) plus your Intelligence modifier as its attack bonus. It strikes as a spell, not as a weapon, so, for example, it can damage creatures that have damage reduction. The hand always strikes from your direction. It does not get a flanking bonus or help a combatant get one. Your feats or combat actions do not affect the hand. If the *skeletal hand* goes beyond the spell range, if it goes out of your sight, or if you are not directing it, the hand returns to you and hovers.

Each round after the first, you can use a move action to redirect the skeletal limb to a new target. If you do not, the hand continues to attack the previous round's target. On any round the hand switches targets, it gets one attack. Subsequent rounds of attacking that target allow the hand to make multiple attacks if your base attack bonus would allow it.

If an attacked creature has spell resistance, you make a caster level check (1d20 + caster level) against that spell resistance the first time the *skeletal hand* strikes it. If the hand is successfully resisted, the spell is dispelled. If not, the hand has its normal full effect on that creature for the duration of the spell.

Torture

Enchantment (compulsion) [language-dependant, mind affecting]

Level: Cleric 4, Sorcerer/Wizard 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living creature

Duration: 1 round/2 levels

Saving Throw: Will partial

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell allows you to ask questions of the target, who must answer them



truthfully or suffer terrible pain. Once each round, for the duration

of the spell, you can ask the target one question. If the target answers truthfully the spell has no effect that round. If the target deliberately lies or does not answer, the target is wracked by excruciating pain and takes 1d6 points of Constitution damage. A successful Will save halves this damage (minimum 1). The target must make a new save each time it fails to answer a question truthfully.

The target must be conscious, able to understand you, and able to respond for this spell to function. If you ask a question that the target simply does not know, you immediately become aware of this fact and the question is wasted (with the target suffering no ill effects). The target must remain within range for the entire duration of this spell and it is typically bound to prevent escape.

NPC CONTACTS FOR CLERICS OF THIS RELIGION

The following contacts within Vecna's cult try to avoid being obvious in their allegiance and might make excellent sources of knowledge, for a time. Ultimately, these individuals might betray the PCs after learning enough to harm them.

Trevyan Linth-Neheli (CE male human aristocrat 3/cleric 1 of Vecna/wizard 1) is a minor scion of two

KAS'S LEGACY

As armies of the undead spread the shadow of the Spidered Throne across the world, one champion rose to prominence within Vecna's legions, a warrior of unparalleled prowess and cruelty known as Kas the Bloody-Handed. Although sources disagree on when and how he gained his dark boon, Kas's fearful reputation and abilities largely stemmed from his vampiric nature. Pleasing the lich-king through his ruthlessly enacted campaigns and his fearlessness in the arch-lich's presence, Vecna elevated Kas to the rank of his personal lieutenant. As a gift, the Whispered One crafted him a blade of meteoric iron empowered by magics of untold evil: the *Sword of Kas*.

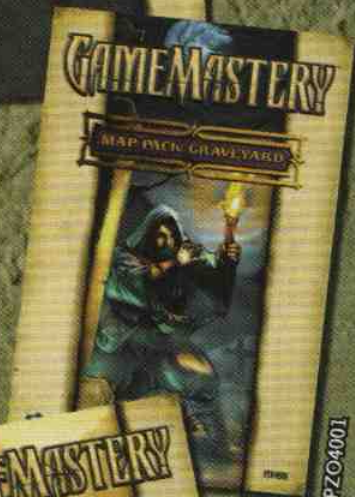
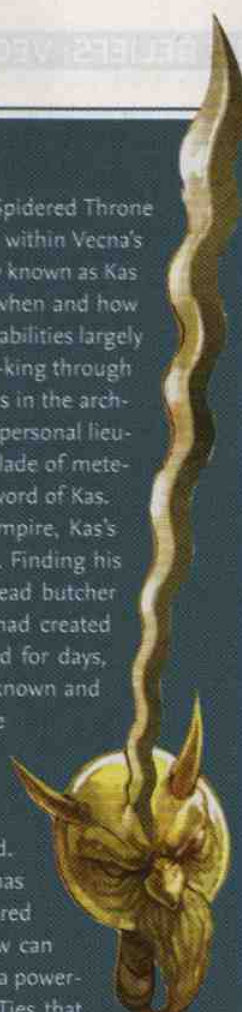
Despite the boons Vecna bestowed upon the vampire, Kas's loyalty paled before his own cruel-hearted ambition. Finding his master weakened after a strenuous battle, the undead butcher attacked Vecna using the very blade the arch-lich had created for him. Legends tell that the resulting battle raged for days, with Vecna employing magics the world had never known and Kas severing his master's left hand and eye. When the smoke and spell-storms cleared, all that remained of the evil titans were three terrible artifacts, the *Hand and Eye of Vecna* and the *Sword of Kas*.

After the battle, both villains were thought destroyed. While Vecna has since returned as a god, Kas too has found a way to cheat his final death. Through his hatred for the Maimed Lord and bargains with powers few can comprehend, Kas has taken on the form of a vestige, a powerful being trapped beyond life and death (see "The Ties that Bind" in *DRAGON* #341). Already there are those who claim to work Kas's will in the world—disrupting Vecna's plots and killing his worshipers—and prophesizing a time when Bloody-Handed Kas will return to again lay the arch-lich low.

Kasian Vampires

Kas was a powerful vampire, and a small number of vampires sired by him still roam the land. These vampires have slightly different abilities compared to typical specimen, a legacy of Kas's nature and the magic Vecna used to make him a vampire. Kasian vampires have a +8 Strength bonus (instead of the template's normal +6) and electricity resistance 30. When using a weapon that bestows negative energy levels (such as a nine lives stealer or lifedrinker) or causes excessive bleeding (such as a weapon with the wounding property), the vampire gains 5 temporary hit points whenever one of those abilities successfully triggers, just as if it had used its own blood drain or energy drain ability on the target. When holding the *Sword of Kas*, these vampires' fast healing ability increases to 10.

The most unusual thing about a Kasian vampire is its limited power to control others. Spawn created by a Kasian vampire are bound with a *geas* of cooperation rather than utter enslavement, and its dominate ability works like *suggestion* rather than *dominate person*. This last drawback makes Kasian vampires less likely to create spawn who are powerful enough to challenge them (as there is the risk of betrayal), which has kept the number of vampires of this kind low.



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ancient noble families who served the lich Vecna long ago. Trevyan joined the cult more from decadent curiosity than any particular belief in its values but has since embraced the faith with fanaticism that will result in his quick discovery and execution by local authorities or take him to a position of leadership within the decade.

Trevyan is a lithe, languid, near-albino with a taste for decadence. He projects a casual attitude that makes most anyone willing to dismiss his preferences as the merest of noble faults. He is everyone's tacky, tasteless friend, with a too-liberal sense of noblesse oblige that takes him slumming with adventurers of all ranks.

Trevyan is an excellent patron for low-level adventurers of all sorts. Whether sponsoring them to explore some forgotten ruins and letting him examine whatever they find or helping them against some high-ranking personage they have inadvertently crossed, he seeks to make himself indispensable (if the PCs are good, he'll use these interactions to slowly subvert them).

Havner the Black (NE male human rogue 9/cleric 1 of Vecna) is a member of the City of Greyhawk Thieves' Guild and the cult of Vecna. Sent by the guild to investigate strange activity at an old warehouse in its territory, he was captured by the cultists there and given a choice: die or become a double agent for the cult. He chose the latter and has been reporting guild activities to the cult for almost two years now. Although he has a personal dislike for some members of his cell, he's adopted their beliefs to the extent of becoming a cleric of the faith. He now hopes to become a senior lieutenant and a lesser lich, faking his own death so the guild doesn't pursue him.

Havner is of average height and sturdy build but is remarkably agile despite his bulk. He earned his nickname because of his willingness to paint his skin black to better hide in darkness while doing surveillance for the guild. When with the cult he is usually accompanied by several undead servants (he owns a *phylactery of undead turning*), or by other thieves when operating with the guild.

Havner is a good contact for mid-level PCs, either as an ally within the Thieves' Guild or someone with a questionable background who can help them out in a pinch with some stealth and healing. He enjoys a quick profit and might even hire himself as a sneak, spy, and lockpick for adventurers who need these talents (as long as the PCs' goals don't conflict with the interests of the guild or the cult). As he is fast and sneaky, he might make a mysterious recurring adversary for good PCs.

Blaygus (NE female human necromancer 15) is a strong-willed cult necromancer. While she has little interest in leadership, her competence and knowledge often result in her filling in for an absent leader, accomplishing difficult tasks with ease. Blaygus initially chose the cult to gain easy access to the secrets of lichdom, but has since become reliant on its knowledge base; unlike most members, she has remained unentangled by a web of secrets due to a combination of forthrightness about her own personal information and an extensive series of pointless falsehoods about herself which she uses to confuse

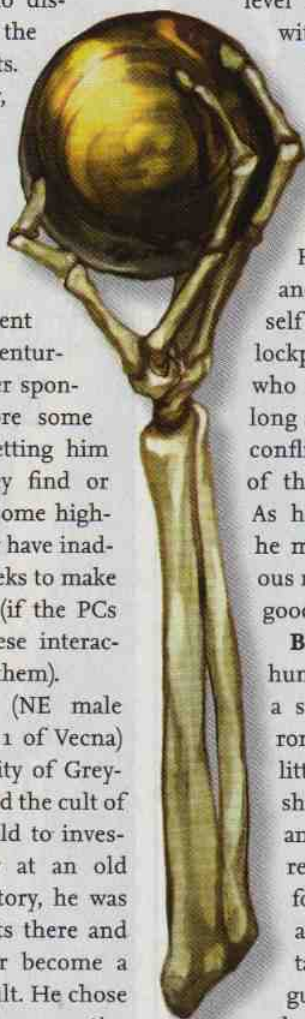
those who would try to gain power over her.

Blaygus is tall with dark blonde hair and somewhat manlike features; it is a simple matter for her to disguise herself as a man by wearing men's clothing and speaking in a deeper voice (to those who don't know her she sometimes explains this person is her "brother," one of her lies designed to confuse enemies). She is curt, sparing few words of praise or criticism, as if she commands underlings in the same manner as one might command mindless undead.

Blaygus is a reliable contact for high-level adventurers. Capable of teleporting, creating magic items, and manipulating undead, she can be almost anywhere in a short period of time with a delivery of magical goods or minions. As a trusted lieutenant of the cult, she might be responsible for giving PC members their orders or debriefing them after a mission. Her knowledge, arcane ability, and access to cult resources make her a good mastermind for a cult cell or a recurring villain who manages to get away and inform another cell of the PCs' identities.

Ely Cromlich (CE male half-fiend human fighter 18/wizard 6) played an undeniable role in Vecna's accession to godhood. A powerful member of the planar faction called the Doomguard, for more than a century Ely controlled Sigil's massive Armory.

Within the Armory stand four portals to some of the foulest regions of the Inner Planes, one of which leads to a smoldering realm of endless ash. While the Doomguard hold a redoubt on that sea of dead embers, they once controlled Vecna's nearby skull-shaped fortress Cavitus, but were driven from it when the Arch-Lich claimed it as his own. In their retreat, they were forced to abandon many of their dearest treasures and have ever since sought a chance to retake the tainted citadel. Thus, when a period of inactivity was reported, it was Ely Cromlich and a



CUSTOMIZED SUMMON LIST

Clerics of Vecna cannot summon good creatures with their summoning spells. They do, however, have other creatures on their summoning list that they can draw forth to aid them in their evil work.

Summon Monster II

Tainted raver gnoll*††

Summon Monster III

Necromental, Small (any)†

Desiccator*†

Summon Monster IV

Unholy scion†† bugbear

Taint elemental, Small*††

Summon Monster V

Necromental†, Medium (any)

Taint elemental, Medium*††

Summon Monster VI

Cinderspawn*†

Voidwraith*†

Summon Monster VII

Bleakborn*†

Necromental, Large (any)†

Summon Monster VIII

Necromental†, Huge (any)

Taint elemental, Huge*††

Summon Monster IX

Necromental, greater (any)†

Entropic††† athach

Taint elemental, greater*††

Atropal scion*†

* This creature has the extraplanar subtype but otherwise has the normal statistics for a creature of its kind.

† Indicates a creature or template from *Libris Mortis*

†† Indicates a creature or template from *Heroes of Horror*

††† Indicates a creature from the *Manual of the Planes* or the *Planar Handbook*

taskforce of the Doomguard's most skilled warriors who were ordered to infiltrate the fortress and recover what they could.

None know what truly happened at Cavitus, but only Cromlich returned alive. In the wake of his later acts, some believe the half-fiend came face to face with Vecna himself and either sold his service to the demigod in return for his life or was destroyed—his spirit being replaced by something more inclined to Vecna's will. Either way, Ely Cromlich returned to Sigil serving a new master.

In the months and years that followed, Cromlich secretly studied magic and—with the help of numerous powerful demons—laid powerful symbols of chaos and disruption within the walls of the Armory. When war came to Sigil, he acted to hasten the destruction of

many of the city's more lawful factions by tainting the area around the Armory with chaotic energy, inciting riots, and open fighting with an incursion of demons. During this chaos, though, he was killed. His sacrifice proved sufficient, however, and when Vecna sought to enter Sigil, the city's fundamental wards barring deities were weakened enough to allow him entry. For Cromlich's work, the ascending god restored the half-fiend to life.

A master of many weapons, the greatest of which is his own cunning mind, Cromlich stands just over 6 feet tall, with jet black skin, short white hair, and sharply pointed ears. Most notably, though, are the terrible scars on his right side, where the demonkin was struck by a *sphere of annihilation*. When Vecna returned Cromlich to life, he created a golden right leg and arm to replace his

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Dumb as Mud

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Look, if you wanted to—

THE SECRET HISTORY OF VECNA

As befits the god of secrets, many facets of Vecna's rise to power are unknown and widely debated by both his cult and other deities.

The Serpent: While still mortal, Vecna claimed to have been instructed in the ways of magic by an enigmatic entity he referred to only as the Serpent. This being supposedly revealed arcane secrets of incredible power, such as the path to lichdom, the location of Citadel Cavitus, and countless other magical mysteries. While some claim the Serpent is an embodiment of magical power, others suggest it might be a persona of the archfiend Asmodeus or a rumored, godlike entity known as Mok'slyk. Still others believe the Serpent is merely an insane manifestation of Vecna's obsessive ambition—though his cult brutally murders any who tout such heresy.

The Demiplane of Dread: For a span of several years, Vecna the demigod vanished. While his cult holds that during this time he was either acting on the plot that elevated him to godhood or was undergoing a kind of divine metamorphosis, a few half-crazed planewalkers say Vecna was trapped in the rumored, mist-shrouded Demiplane of Dread. Supposedly, he ruled a prison realm of the undead, waging a stalemated war with the neighboring domain of his infamous betrayer, Kas the Bloody-Handed. Although Vecna escaped, supposedly this bleak realm was claimed by a new ruler and still exists somewhere in the mists.

Ascension: How Vecna managed his apotheosis is a secret for which countless petty godlings would risk anything. It is possible that either the collection of more secrets than any other being in the Multiverse or his drawing on the evil and negative energy of Cavitus warranted his ascension. The wildest—though surprisingly most widely held—explanation claims Vecna used the power of a rival demigod to warp the bounds of a planar anomaly, forcing his way into the deity-barred city of Sigil, the supposed heart of the Multiverse. Once there, reportedly the strength of his divine will allowed him to reshape the entire Multiverse as he pleased. While these events seem suspect, numerous lunatics throughout the planes claim to remember a time when the very laws of existence seemed different and they held great power; although none of these pariahs seem to possess any abilities of consequence now.

servant's lost appendages, as well as a golden left hand and eye to forever display the fiend's allegiance. Even crippled, Cromlich is deadly and sly, but he remains embittered at having lost so much in the service of a fickle god.

Ely Cromlich is a dangerous figure for high-level PCs to encounter. He wanders the planes, hated and hunted by survivors of his faction and the agents of innumerable deities. After his ascension, Vecna largely abandoned his minion, although for some unknowable purpose he does maintain a shield over Cromlich that acts a permanent

nondetection spell. Despite the aid he personally provided their god, few in the cult of Vecna know of the half-fiend's acts and he bears little status. Many of those who have learned of his role in the Maimed Lord's apotheosis suspect that

and seek him either out to prevent an influx of undeserving deities or to learn how to make their own accessions. Others believe that knowing how the Maimed Lord achieved his power means Cromlich might know how to strip Vecna of his godhood. In either case, Ely Cromlich might know the greatest secret in all the multiverse and, for that, he cannot be allowed to live.

PLANAR ALLY

Gusten the Bloodfiend, a ghast with all of the abilities of the fiendish template, is a unique creation of Vecna. This hideous



thing has translucent-pale skin, showing his musculature and blood vessels underneath. His features are strangely smoothed as if his bones were worn away or compressed, lacking hard angles anywhere on his body except his teeth and claws. As a result, his head is sloped and almost catlike. His limbs have apelike proportions—long in the arms and short in the legs. Gusten is hairless except for an unkempt mane on his head and neck. Cunning and stealthy, he hates all living things but tolerates the members of his master's cult. If left idle while serving the cult, he goes out of his way to torture and kill all nonessential creatures within his reach (vermin, small animals, and even cult members he deems worthless).

Gusten has the ability to cannibalize Small or larger corpses to heal himself, regaining 5 hit points per round of this activity. He can also drain blood like a vampire. Using either of these

abilities causes his skin to flush bright red for several minutes, making him look as though he is drenched in blood.

Gusten attacks from hiding, lashing out with claws and his foul

stench before scuttling away.

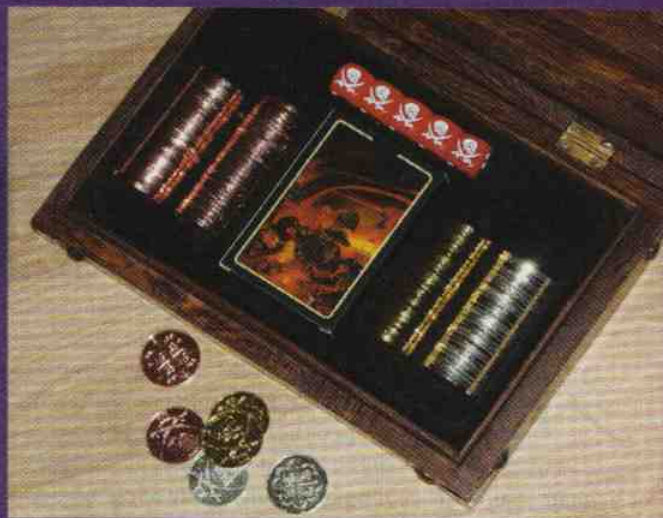
He doesn't typically shy from open combat, particularly if he has undead minions assigned to him. Gusten revels in his strange life and doesn't want to see it end, and he avoids confronting clerics so they do not have the opportunity to turn or destroy him. He rarely speaks and does the minimum amount of work necessary to complete his service.

Gusten prefers living creatures as payment (especially humanoids). Each creature counts as 100 gp of payment, although particularly exotic specimens (fey and good outsiders) are worth up to twice as much and poor ones (including most orcs and goblinoids) are worth half that at most. All creatures offered must be at least Small size. Gusten always kills and eats these sacrifices before performing the requested service unless time is pressing. He also covets items that make him stronger or help him resist turning attempts. ☛



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Being a pirate, or adventurer of any sort, often revolves around the redistribution of wealth. Sometimes it is the result of marauding, but not always. A good game is often a welcome diversion. With Crystal Caste's new Pirate's Plunder Poker Set, you're ready. Each round-topped wooden chest contains a deck of playing cards with beautifully illustrated backs, five dice with a pirate flag in place of the one, and pirate doubloon poker chips in gold, silver, and copper. All you need now are easy prey to plunder.



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Bestowed Curses

VARIANTS FOR THE VILE

by Jonathan Drain • illustrated by Andrew Hou

A night hag's blasphemous revenge against a noble's lineage. The horrible fate that awaits those who open the sacred tomb. The prophecies of doom called out by a dying blackguard. Curses have long been a mainstay of clerics, wizards, and monsters alike, affording a variety of ways to bring woe to their enemies when death is undesirable or not a viable option.

Despite their unpleasant image, curses are not the sole domain of villains, nor are they inherently evil. In contrast, a well-used curse can be a powerful weapon on the side of good, offering an alternative to killing a criminal or monster outright when the possibility exists

it might find redemption. At the very least, crippling an opponent with just one spell is sometimes simply more efficient than other damage-dealing magic.

While it might be tempting to create a new spell for a particularly specialized affliction, *bestow curse* allows for a wide variety of effects and penalties. The true versatility of *bestow curse*—and its more powerful brother *greater bestow curse* (see sidebar)—lies in the ability to afflict the target with a variant curse of the caster's own invention, rather than limiting oneself to choosing the default effects. The following list provides a range of such variant curses that both characters and NPCs might make use of.

Variant bestow curse effects

- The target takes a -8 penalty on all checks made using one skill, such as Climb or Spellcraft.
- The target's Strength score counts as 10 less (minimum 1) for the purposes of carrying capacity. This might cause some individuals to suddenly take encumbrance penalties while others collapse under the weight of their own equipment.
- The target's armor falls into disrepair, halving its hit points and hardness while decreasing the armor bonus it grants by -4 (to a minimum of 1) and doubling the armor check penalty. This effect shifts to any new armor donned, while the armor removed returns to normal (although any damage it might have taken remains).
- The target must carry something designated by the caster or suffer a -5 penalty on all saves. The item can be vague (such as a holy symbol of Vecna) or specific (such as the Helm of King Aramil), but it cannot be something dangerous or deadly for the target to carry (a massive boulder or burning coals). The caster must give the object to the target when casting the spell.
- One of the target's limbs ceases to function. A nonfunctional arm cannot hold or wield any item and cannot be used to perform somatic spell components, while a nonfunctional leg prevents the target from walking properly without a crutch (and even then the target can only move at half speed). A nonfunctional wing prevents the target from flying if it uses wings to fly.
- The target loses all weapon and armor proficiencies, other than simple weapons, natural weapons, and unarmed strikes. If the target has feats for which the lost proficiencies are prerequisites (such as

Weapon Focus), he loses the use of these as well.

- The target becomes completely socially inept. He takes -6 penalties on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate, and Sense Motive checks, on Charisma checks to influence someone, and on Disguise checks when attempting to act as someone else.
- The target's armor, shield, or one of his weapons (caster's choice) becomes cursed. Its enhancement bonus is reversed and it loses any other special abilities, so a +4 *flaming longsword* becomes a -4 *longsword*. If nonmagical, the weapon, shield, or armor instead becomes a -1 weapon, shield, or armor.
- The target is stricken with cowardice. Each time the character rolls for initiative, he must immediately make a Will save (with the same DC as the curse) or become shaken for the duration of the combat. The first time the character takes damage in the combat, he must save again or become shaken for 1d4 rounds (if already shaken, instead treat as panicked for 1d4 rounds).
- The target appears to be a different alignment (caster's choice) for the purpose of divination spells and spell-like abilities such as *detect evil*.
- The target's damage reduction, spell resistance, or elemental resistance of one type is reduced by 5, to a minimum of 0.
- The target immediately becomes fatigued until he has consumed 1 pint of blood. Thereafter, he gains a thirst for blood and normal food and drink no longer nourish him. He awakens fatigued each morning and must drink 1 pint of blood to stave off this fatigue for the day.
- Everyone who knows the target no longer recognizes him, except for the caster. Even the target's allies do not recognize him and those who come to know him again forget knowing him each morning.

Greater Bestow Curse

Necromancy

Level: Cleric 7, sorcerer/wizard 8

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

The spellcaster places a curse on the creature touched, choosing one of the three following effects.

- One ability score is reduced to 1, or two ability scores take -6 penalties (to a minimum of 1).
- -8 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks.
- Each turn, the subject has a 25% chance to act normally, otherwise, it takes no action.

You can also invent your own curse, but it should be no more powerful than those described above, and the Dungeon Master has the final say on the curse's effect.

A greater curse cannot be dispelled, nor can it be removed with *break enchantment* or *limited wish*. A *miracle* or *wish* spell removes a greater curse, as does *remove curse* cast by a spellcaster of at least 17th level.

- The target gains a susceptibility to damage from a certain source (caster's choice). All damage taken from this source is increased by 5 points. The source must be either a specific element, such as fire, or weapons made of a specified uncommon material such as mithral, silver, or bone.
- The target loses the ability to heal naturally (although he does not lose innate healing abilities such as fast healing or regeneration). In addition, spells of the conjuration (healing) subschool only heal the target for half as much as normal.

Such spells that cause damage are unaffected by this curse. For example, a *cure light wounds* spell cast upon an undead creature is unaffected, while an *inflict light wounds* spell cast on the same creature would be halved.

- The target's sight is reduced to 20 feet, even with natural abilities and spells such as *darkvision*.
- The target must roll a Fortitude save (with the same DC as the curse) each time he commits an evil or illegal act to avoid becoming nauseated for 2d4 rounds. Alternatively, the caster may use this curse to affect those committing acts of kindness and generosity.
- The target loses the use of one of his feats. If this feat is a prerequisite for other feats, the target loses the use of those feats as well.
- One of the target's minor racial abilities is disabled. Minor abilities include *darkvision*, low-light vision, racial save bonuses, racial skill bonuses, racial weapon proficiency or familiarity, or stability. The DM has the final word as to what other racial abilities qualify as minor.
- The target immediately becomes fatigued, and henceforth requires 12 hours of sleep each time he rests or else is fatigued for the remainder of the day.
- The target becomes a disease carrier. Anyone the target touches or who touches the target must roll a DC 16 Fortitude save or else contract blinding sickness or cackle fever (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, 292). The target is immune to the selected disease.
- The target has uncontrollable shakes, imposing a -4 penalty on ranged attacks and a 20% spell failure chance for spells with somatic components.
- The target becomes unable to tell a lie. He may, however, choose to avoid answering a question in order to avoid telling the truth.
- The target fears killing and must attempt to deal nonlethal damage

whenever possible, taking a penalty of -4 on attack rolls with most weapons to do so.

Variant greater bestow curse effects

- The target loses a class ability, such as spellcasting, sneak attack damage, or barbarian rage. If this class ability is a prerequisite for other abilities or feats, the target loses the use of those feats as well.
- The target gains a susceptibility to a one energy type (such as fire or electricity) or to weapons made of a specified rare or unusual material (such as adamantite or silver) of the caster's choice. The target takes an additional +50% extra damage from this source. This effect does not stack with any other weaknesses the target might already possess.
- The target's alignment gradually moves toward another of the caster's choice. For example, a lawful good paladin might be cursed to become chaotic evil, losing access to all of his paladin spells and abilities. There is no immediate effect, but the target must make a Will save each day thereafter or his alignment shifts one step toward the chosen alignment.
- The target takes damage equal to the damage he deals to others. Only damage dealt with weapons is affected, not ability damage or spell effects.
- One of the target's attack options is lost (such as a dragon's breath weapon or a medusa's petrifying gaze attack).
- The target can no longer sleep soundly, perhaps wracked by nightmares or guilt over past evil deeds (caster's choice). He wakes fatigued each morning and cannot perform tasks that require

him to be well-rested, such as a wizard preparing spells.

- The target's most powerful or cherished possession (DM's discretion) is drawn by fate to fall into the hands of a hated enemy or rival.
- The target is completely unable to use any three skills of the caster's choosing. Knowledge skills must be chosen separately.
- Everyone the target sees appears to be undead, their flesh rotting from their bones and their voices reduced to hollow rasps.
- All critical threats made against the target automatically confirm without requiring the attacker to reroll.
- A noisy spirit haunts the target. Aside from unnerving those around the target, the spirit prevents him from using the Hide or Move Silently abilities, becoming invisible, disguising himself, or otherwise altering his appearance. A manifestation of the curse, the spirit is not actually undead and cannot be turned, rebuked, or destroyed.
- All new creatures and NPCs the target encounters treat him with an initial attitude of hostile. Allies and current acquaintances do not change their attitudes toward the target. ☐





Bloodlines

Three Variant Vampires

by Michael J. Montesano • illustrated by Steve Ellis

Dreadful hunters of the night, deathless princes of ruined houses, feral corpses ravenous for blood—all of these images describe vampires. As ancient as legend, these terrifying undead rise every night, endlessly hungering for the blood of the living. Yet, a vampire's most romanticized ability is the power to pass on its immortal curse, corrupting its prey into undying slaves, each plotting to supplant its master. With all eternity in which to hunt, a vampire might sire countless spawn of a multitude of races and with a variety of powers. Over time, and through the innate abilities of countless spawn, even the scourge of vampirism might change, fundamentally corrupting into variant strains of the same ageless curse.

Presented here are three new forms of vampirism, each similar to the well-known, pure form of undeath and sharing the same weaknesses, but with new abilities and alternative powers. Each of these new types of vampire includes a number of abilities and deceptive traits to baffle even the most determined hunters of the undead.

Savage Vampire

Reeking of upturned grave rot, this bear-sized hulk of matted hair and filth, bone-pierced flesh unleashes a sound: half hiss, half rasping roar. Beneath dull, blood-clouded eyes extend broken fangs the size of daggers. Rivulets of blood and rank saliva pour from its under-slung jaw.

OGRE SAVAGE VAMPIRE

CR 4

CE Large undead (augmented giant)

Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +12, Spot +12

Languages Giant

AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21

(-1 size, +9 natural, +3 armor)

hp 29 (4 HD), fast healing 3; DR 10/magic

Immune undead traits

Resist acid 10, cold 10, fire 10, +2 turn resistance

Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +1

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee 2 claws +10 (1d8+10 plus energy drain) or greatclub +11 (2d8+12)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Base Atk +3; Grp +15

Atk Options blood drain, energy drain, zombie spawn

Special Actions children of the wild

Abilities Str 27, Dex 10, Con —, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 11

SQ scent, wild shape

Feats Alertness^B, Combat Reflexes^B, Run^B, Toughness, Track^B, Weapon Focus (greatclub)

Skills Climb +9, Hide +8, Intimidate +8, Listen +12, Move

Silently +8, Search +8, Sense Motive +8, Spot +12, Survival +8

Advancement by character class

Possessions Greatclub, hide armor

Blood Drain (Ex) A savage vampire can suck blood from a living victim with its fangs by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points

of Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained. On each such successful attack, the savage vampire gains 5 temporary hit points.

Energy Drain (Su) Living creatures hit by a savage vampire's claw attack (or any other natural weapon the vampire might possess) gain one negative level. The DC is 12 for the Fortitude save to remove a negative level. The save DC is Charisma-based. For each negative level bestowed, the savage vampire gains 5 temporary hit points.

Zombie Spawn (Su) Any creature slain by a savage vampire's energy drain rises as a zombie 1d4 hours later. Spawn are under the command of the savage vampire that created them and remain enslaved until its death. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

Children of the Wild (Su) Savage vampires command the rabid, starving creatures of the world and once per day can call forth 1d2 brown

bears, 1d4 crocodiles, 1d4 leopards, 1d6+1 rat swarms, 1d4 Large sharks, or a pack of 3d6 hyenas as a standard action. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the savage vampire for up to 1 hour. Creatures will not answer a call that would force them to enter an environment they cannot survive in (thus, sharks will not come to a savage vampire on land).

Wild Shape (Su) This savage vampire can transform into any Large, Medium, Small, or Tiny animal 4 times per day.

Savage vampires are undead consumed by their thirst for blood. Feral and brutish, these vampires stalk the wild reaches of the world like starving animals, gaining power over degenerate scavengers and abandoning their coffins for filthy, darkened holes. Although they often slake their thirst on animals, humanoid hunters and civilized travelers make just as savory meals.

This example uses an ogre as the base creature.

Strategies and Tactics

Usually uncomplicated combatants, savage vampires know only their craving for blood and do all they can to quell it as swiftly as possible. Charging into battle, a savage vampire relies on its undead resiliency and unnatural strength to overcome prey. Should its victims defend against its initial assault or bring holy magic to bear, it retreats to heal and summon feral animal allies and zombie minions before marshalling another attack. If it is again forced to flee, a savage vampire doggedly pursues its prey, using its wild shape ability to slip into even the best guarded camps and attack from surprise.

Creating A Savage Vampire

"Savage vampire" is an acquired template that can be added to any fey, giant, humanoid, or monstrous humanoid creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A savage vampire uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead and it gains the augmented subtype. Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: Increase all current and future Hit Dice to d12s.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +2.

Alignment: Always evil (any).

Armor Class: The base creature's natural armor bonus increases by +4.

Attack: A savage vampire retains all the attacks of the base creature and also gains two claw attacks if it didn't already have them. If the base creature can use weapons, the savage vampire retains this ability. A creature with natural weapons retains those natural weapons. A savage vampire fighting without weapons uses either its claw attacks or its primary natural



weapon (if it has any). A savage vampire armed with a weapon uses its claws or a weapon, as it desires.

Damage: Savage vampires have two claw attacks. If the base creature does not have this attack form, use the appropriate damage value from the table below according to the savage vampire's size. Creatures that have other kinds of natural weapons retain their old damage values or use the appropriate value from the table below, whichever is better.

Size	Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1d2
Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

Attack Options: A savage vampire retains all the attack options of the base creature and gains those described below.

Blood Drain (Ex): See the vampire entry on page 250 of the *Monster Manual*.

Energy Drain (Su): Living creatures hit by a savage vampire's claw attack gain one negative level. For each negative level bestowed, the savage vampire gains 5 temporary hit points.

Zombie Spawn (Su): Any creature slain by a savage vampire's energy drain rises as a zombie 1d4 hours later. Spawn are under the command of the savage vampire that created them and remain enslaved until its death. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

Special Actions: A savage vampire retains all the special actions of the base creature and gains those described below.

Children of the Wild (Su): Savage vampires command the rabid, starving creatures of the world and once per day can call forth 1d2 brown bears, 1d4 Medium constrictor snakes, 1d4 crocodiles, 1d6+1 rat

swarms, 1d4 Large sharks, or a pack of 3d6 hyenas as a standard action. (If the base creature is not terrestrial, this power might summon other creatures of similar power.) These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the savage vampire for up to 1 hour. Creatures will not answer a call that would force them to enter an environment they cannot survive in (thus, sharks will not come to a savage vampire on land).

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +6, Dex +4, Cha +4. As an undead creature, a savage vampire has no Constitution score.

Special Qualities: A savage vampire retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

Damage Reduction (Su): A savage vampire has damage reduction 10/magic. A savage vampire's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

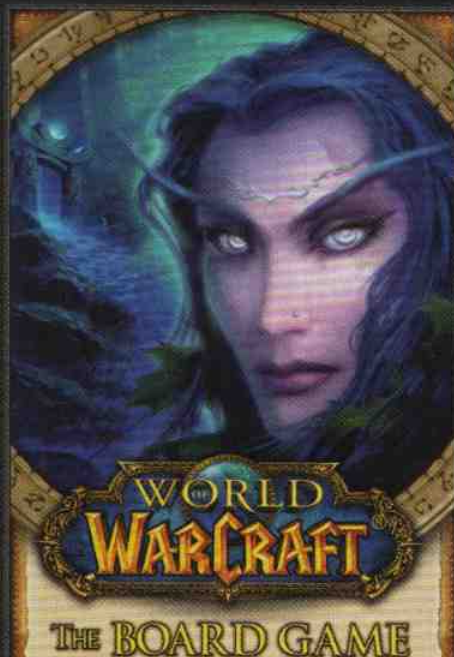
Fast Healing (Ex): A savage vampire heals 3 points of damage each round so long as it has at least 1 hit point. If reduced to 0 hit points in combat, it automatically assumes a swift animal form and attempts to escape. This form cannot be changed until the savage vampire heals back to at least 1 hit point. The savage vampire can still be damaged in this animal form, keeping track of all additional damage it takes until it can rest. Once at rest in an appropriately dark place, a savage vampire is helpless. It regains 1 hit point per hour until it is back to 0 hit points, at which point it is no longer helpless and resumes healing at the rate of 3 hit points per round.

Resistances (Ex): A savage vampire has resistance to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10.

Scent (Ex): A savage vampire gains the ability to track creatures by scent.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A savage vampire has +2 turn resistance.

Unbound: Savage vampires do not have coffins like normal vampires



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and are capable of resting in any area of absolute darkness. While this allows savage vampires greater mobility than others, finding a place in the wilds where no light reaches often proves difficult. Savage vampires often spend their days at the bottom of deep, stagnant bogs, within caves, or within the rooty hollows of ancient dead trees.

Wild Shape (Su): A savage vampire can transform into an animal as if it were a druid of a level equal to 10 + half the savage vampire's Hit Dice. Regardless of its HD, savage vampires cannot use wild shape to turn into elementals or plants. For example, a 15-HD savage vampire could wild shape into any Huge, Large, Medium, Small, or Tiny animal five times per day. Any animal a savage vampire transforms into looks sickly and starving.

Feats: Vampires gain Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Run, and Track as bonus feats, assuming the base creature meets the prerequisites and doesn't already have these feats.

Skills: Savage vampires have a +8 racial bonus on Hide, Intimidate, Listen, Move Silently, Search, Spot, and Survival checks. Otherwise same as the base creature.

Advancement: By character class.

Level Adjustment: Same as the base creature +6.

Shadow Vampire

Two points of crimson malice stare out from the shadows. The creature's barely human-shaped form is faded and indistinct, like darkness come to life.

SHADOW VAMPIRE, 5TH-LEVEL

HUMAN FIGHTER CR 7

CE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +17, Spot +17

Languages Abyssal, Common

AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 20; Dodge, Mobility

(+4 Dex, +6 natural, +4 armor)

hp 32 (5 HD), fast healing 5; DR 10/silver and magic

Immune undead traits

Resist cold 10, electricity 10, +4 turn resistance

Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +4

Weakness light weakness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee slam +10 (1d6+8 plus Strength damage) or +1 spiked chain +12 melee (2d4+11)

Ranged mwk shortbow +10 (1d6/x3)

Base Atk +5; Grp +10

Atk Options Blindfight, Power Attack, blood drain, create sawn, Strength damage

Special Actions dominate, summon shadows

Spell-like Abilities (CL 5th)

3/day—darkness

Abilities Str 20, Dex 19, Con —, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 12

SQ shadow form, shadow jump

Feats Alertness^B, Blind-Fight, Combat

Reflexes^B, Dodge^B, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes^B, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (spiked chain), Weapon Specialization (spiked chain)

Skills Bluff +9, Climb +9, Hide +11, Listen +17, Move Silently +11, Ride +12, Search +9, Sense Motive +3, Spot +17

Advancement by character class

Possessions +1 spiked chain, masterwork shortbow, masterwork chain shirt

Blood Drain (Ex) A shadow vampire can suck blood from a living victim with its fangs by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained. On each such successful attack, the shadow vampire



gains 5 temporary hit points.

Strength Damage (Su) Living creatures hit by a shadow vampire's slam attack (or any other natural weapon the vampire might possess) take 1 point of Strength damage. For each point of strength damage dealt, the shadow vampire gains 5 temporary hit points.

Dominate (Su) A shadow vampire can crush an opponent's will just by looking into his or her eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that the shadow vampire must use a standard action, and those merely looking at it are not affected. Anyone the shadow vampire targets must succeed on a DC 13 Will save or fall instantly under the shadow vampire's influence as though by a *dominate person* spell (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 feet. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Summon Shadows (Su) A shadow vampire can summon 1d4+1 shadows to serve him, once per day. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the shadow vampire for up to 1 hour.

Shadow Jump (Su) A shadow vampire can travel between shadows as if by means of a *dimension door* spell. The limitation is that the magical transport must begin and end in an area with at least some shadow. A shadow vampire can jump up to a total of 100 feet each day in this way; this may be a single jump of 100 feet, two jumps of 50 feet each, or any number of smaller leaps up to the total 100 feet.

Shadow Jump (Su): A shadow vampire can travel between shadows as if by means of a *dimension door* spell. The magical transport must begin and end in an area with at least some shadow. A shadow vampire can jump up to a total of 100 feet each day in this way; this may be a single jump of 100 feet, two jumps of 50 feet each, or any any number of smaller leaps up to the total 100 feet.

Attuned to the powers of night, shadow vampires draw their strength from the tenebrous depths

of the Plane of Shadow, their forms reflecting the darkness of their undead souls. Able to travel through shadows and summon beings of unliving gloom, shadow vampires embrace the darkness as a deceptive ally in their endless hunt for blood.

This example uses a 5th-level human fighter as the base creature.

Strategies and Tactics

Attacking from surprise whenever possible, shadow vampires strive to keep their opponents off balance and terrified. Able to slip through the gloom or hide as an animate shadow, a shadow vampire prefers to single out a lone target against whom to make hit-and-run attacks, a shadow vampire often uses these lesser undead as decoys and diversions, commanding them to distract allies while it goes for its true target's neck.

Creating A Shadow Vampire

"Shadow vampire" is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid or monstrous humanoid creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A shadow vampire uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead and it gains the augmented subtype. Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: Increase all current and future Hit Dice to d12s.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +2.

Alignment: Always evil (any).

Armor Class: The base creature's natural armor bonus increases by +6.

Attack: A shadow vampire retains all the attacks of the base creature and also gains a slam attack if it didn't already have one. If the base creature can use weapons, the shadow vampire retains this ability. A creature with natural weapons retains those natural weapons.

A shadow vampire fighting without weapons uses either its slam attack or its primary natural weapon (if it has any). A shadow vampire armed with a weapon uses its slam or a weapon, as it desires.

Damage: Shadow vampires have slam attacks. If the base creature does not have this attack form, use the appropriate damage value from the table below according to the shadow vampire's size. Creatures that have other kinds of natural weapons retain their old damage values or use the appropriate value from the table below, whichever is better.

Size	Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1d2
Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

Attack Options: A shadow vampire retains all the attack options of the base creature and gains those described below.

Blood Drain (Ex): See the vampire entry on page 250 of the *Monster Manual*.

Create Spawn (Su): See the vampire entry on page 250 of the *Monster Manual*.

Strength Damage (Su): Living creatures hit by a shadow vampire's slam attack take 1 point of Strength damage. For each point of Strength damage dealt, the shadow vampire gains 5 temporary hit points. A shadow vampire can use its Strength damage ability once per round.

Special Actions: A shadow vampire retains all the special actions of the base creature and gains those described below.

Dominate (Su): A shadow vampire can crush an opponent's will just by looking into his or her eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that

the shadow vampire must use a standard action, and those merely looking at it are not affected. Anyone the shadow vampire targets must succeed on a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 shadow vampire's HD + vampire's Cha modifier) or fall instantly under the shadow vampire's influence as though by a *dominate person* spell (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 feet.

Summon Shadows (Su): A shadow vampire can summon 1d4+1 shadows to serve him, once per day. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the shadow vampire for up to 1 hour.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Dex +6, Int +2, Wis +2, Cha +4. As an undead creature, a shadow vampire has no Constitution score.

Special Qualities: A shadow vampire retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

Darkness (Sp): A shadow vampire can cast *darkness* a number of times per day equal to its Charisma modifier (minimum 1/day). Caster level equals the creature's HD.

Damage Reduction (Su): A shadow vampire has damage reduction 10/silver and magic. A shadow vampire's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Fast Healing (Ex): A shadow vampire heals 2 points of damage each round so long as it has at least 1 hit point. This healing increases to 5 points each round if the shadow vampire is in an area of shadowy illumination or darker. If reduced to 0 hit points in combat, it automatically assumes shadow form and attempts to escape. It must reach its coffin home within 2 hours or be utterly destroyed. (It can travel up to 9 miles in 2 hours.) Any additional damage dealt to a shadow vampire forced into shadow form has no effect. Once at rest in its coffin, a shadow vampire is helpless. It regains 1 hit point after 1 hour, then

is no longer helpless and resumes healing at the normal rate per round.

Light Weakness: Besides the vulnerability to true sunlight that all vampires share, shadow vampires are sickened by exposure to magical sunlight (such as *daylight*). In addition, they take a -2 penalty on saving throws against all light-related effects, such as spells with the light descriptor or alchemical items like flash pellets (*Complete Adventurer*, page 118).

Shadow Form (Su): As a standard action, a shadow vampire can change into an animate shadow. While in this form, the shadow vampire gains a +4 competence bonus on Escape Artist, Hide, and Move Silently checks. It also gains concealment. This shadowy concealment is not negated by a *see invisibility* spell, but a *true seeing* spell counteracts the effect. Standing within the radius of a *daylight* spell or in bright natural sunlight temporarily suppresses the concealment effect.

Shadow Jump (Su): A shadow vampire can travel between shadows as if by means of a *dimension door* spell. The limitation is that the magical transport must begin and end in an area with at least some shadow. A shadow vampire can jump up to a total of 100 feet each day in this way; this may be a single jump of 100 feet, two jumps of 50 feet each, or any number of smaller leaps up to the total 100 feet.

Resistances (Ex): A shadow vampire has resistance to cold 10 and electricity 10.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A shadow vampire has +4 turn resistance.

Feats: Shadow vampires gain Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, and Lightning Reflexes as bonus feats, assuming the base creature meets the prerequisites and doesn't already have these feats.

Skills: Shadow vampires have a +8 racial bonus on Bluff, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Search, and

Spot checks. Otherwise same as the base creature.

Advancement: By character class.

Level Adjustment: Same as the base creature +10.

Terror Vampire

A lithe, well-dressed man stands before you. As you look closer, though, you can see something is terribly wrong. From the gaping wounds of his eye sockets blood trickles freely down his face, and insects drop and slatter from the folds of his fine clothing. Turning in your direction, his jaw unfastens and drops impossibly low, revealing several rows of thin white fangs.

TERROR VAMPIRE, 7TH-LEVEL ELF SORCERER CR 10

NE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Common, Elven, Infernal

AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 17

(+5 Dex, +6 natural, +1 deflection)

hp 45 (7 HD), fast healing 5; DR 10/silver and magic

Immune undead traits

Resist cold 10, fire 10, +4 turn resistance

Fort +2, Ref +9, Will +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee slam +4 (1d6+1 plus Wisdom damage)

Base Atk +3; Grp +6

Atk Options blood drain, create spawn, Wisdom damage

Special Actions eyebite

Combat Gear wand of Melf's acid arrow (19 charges)

Spells Known (CL 7th)

3rd (5/day)—*major image* (DC 22), *suggestion*

2nd (7/day)—*invisibility*, *scorching ray* (+8 ranged touch), *touch of idiocy* (DC 19)

1st (8/day)—*charm person* (DC 18), *color spray* (DC 20), *disguise self*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*

0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+8 ranged touch), *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

Spell-like Abilities (CL 7th)

3/day—cause fear (DC 18), *dancing lights*, *disguise self*, *ghost sound*, *silent image* (DC 18)

1/day—*displacement*, *misdirection*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 20, Con —, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 24

SQ gaseous form, vampiric repression

Feats Alertness^B, Greater Spell Focus (illusion), Lightning Reflexes^B, Persuasive^B, Spell Focus (illusion), Stealthy

Skills Bluff +14, Concentration +6, Hide +12, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Listen +12, Move Silently +12, Search +10, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +8, Spot +12

Advancement by character class

Possessions combat gear plus *ring of protection* +1

Blood Drain (Ex) A terror vampire can suck blood from a living victim with its fangs by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution drain

each round the pin is maintained. On each such successful attack, the terror vampire gains 5 temporary hit points.

Wisdom Damage (Su) Living creatures hit by a terror vampire's slam attack (or any other natural weapon the vampire might possess) take 1d4 points of Wisdom damage. For each point of Wisdom damage dealt, the terror vampire gains 5 temporary hit points. A terror vampire can use its Wisdom drain ability once per round.

Eyebite (Su) A terror vampire can cripple an opponent's mind just by looking into his or her eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that the terror vampire must use a standard action, and those merely looking at it are not affected. Anyone the terror vampire targets must succeed on a DC 20 Will save or immediately be affected as if by the spell *eyebite* (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 feet.

Vampiric Repression (Su) This terror vampire can repress all of its vampiric traits and abilities and appear as a normal mortal for 7 rounds a day. During this time, the vampire is unaffected by its normal vampiric weaknesses but also loses the benefits of its special attacks and qualities.

Terror vampires hunger as much for fear as they do for blood. Masters of horror and illusion, some present an openly fiendish appearance, seeking to burst the hearts and overwhelm the sanity of their prey. Others prefer subtler approaches, alienating and horrifying a lone victim with the flash of a fang or a hint at its true nature while maintaining its disguise to all others. Aside from the traditional banes of all vampirekind, terror vampires have a weakness for artistic anguish and a flair for the dramatic, with nothing satisfying

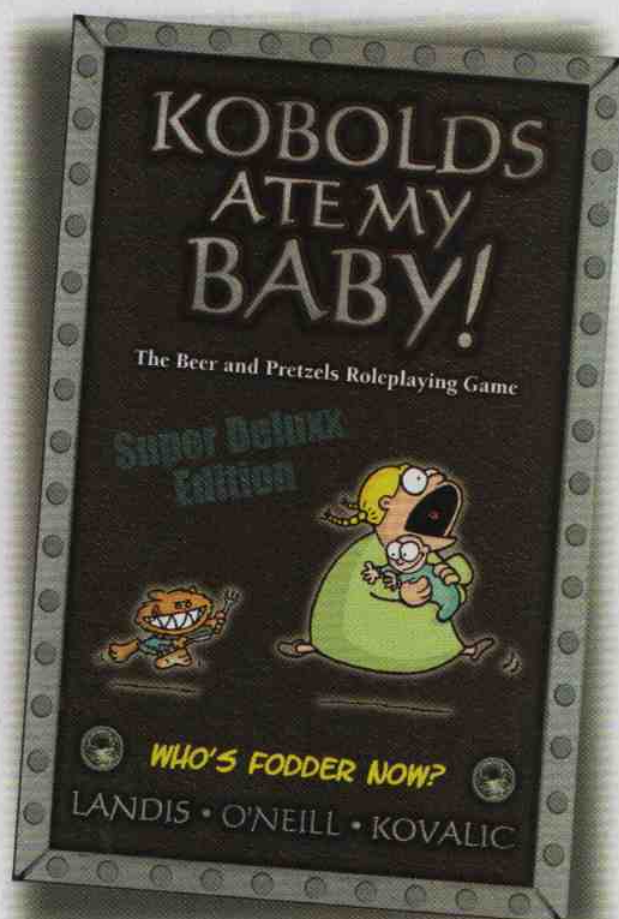
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one more than creating a masterful tableau of gore and surprise.

This example uses a 7th-level elf sorcerer as the base creature.

Strategies and Tactics

Terror vampires typically avoid combat, viewing out and out melee as a failing of their carefully woven plots. Rather, they trick, seduce, or gaslight their targets, weakening their victims' mental stamina with lies and illusions and alienating them from one-time allies. When forced to do battle, a terror vampire sows dis-

cord with its gaze and *fear* abilities, retreating only if it faces destruction, unwilling to leave any alive with the knowledge of its true nature.

Creating A Terror Vampire

"Terror vampire" is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid or monstrous humanoid creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A terror vampire uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead and it gains the augmented subtype. Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: Increase all current and future Hit Dice to d12s.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +3.

Alignment: Always evil (any).

Armor Class: The base creature's natural armor bonus increases by +6.

Attack: A terror vampire retains all the attacks of the base creature and also gains a slam attack if it didn't already have one. If the base creature can use weapons, the terror vampire retains this ability. A creature with natural weapons retains those natural weapons. A terror vampire fighting without weapons uses either its slam attack or its primary natural weapon (if it has any). A terror vampire armed with a weapon uses its slam or a weapon, as it desires.

Damage: Terror vampires have slam attacks. If the base creature does not have this attack form, use the appropriate damage value from the table below according to the terror vampire's size. Creatures that have other kinds of natural weapons retain their old damage values or use the appropriate value from the table below, whichever is better.

Size	Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1d2
Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

Attack Options: A terror vampire retains all the attack options of the base creature and gains those described below.



Blood Drain (Ex): See the vampire entry on page 250 of the *Monster Manual*.

Create Spawn (Su): See the vampire entry on page 250 of the *Monster Manual*.

Wisdom Damage (Su): Living creatures hit by a terror vampire's slam attack take 1d4 points of Wisdom damage. For each point of Wisdom damage dealt, the terror vampire gains 5 temporary hit points. A terror vampire can use its Wisdom damage ability once per round.

Special Actions: A terror vampire retains all the special actions of the base creature and gains those described below. Saves have a DC of 10 + 1/2 terror vampire's HD + vampire's Cha modifier unless noted otherwise.

Eyebite (Su): A terror vampire can cripple an opponent's mind just by looking into his or her eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that the terror vampire must use a standard action, and those merely looking at it are not affected. Anyone the terror vampire targets must succeed on a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 terror vampire's HD + vampire's Cha modifier) or immediately be affected as if by the spell *eyebite* (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 feet.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Dex +6, Int +2, Wis +2, Cha +8. As an undead creature, a terror vampire has no Constitution score.

Special Qualities: A terror vampire retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

Damage Reduction (Su): A terror vampire has damage reduction 10/silver and magic. A terror vampire's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Fast Healing (Ex): A vampire heals 5 points of damage each round so long as it has at least 1 hit point. If reduced to 0 hit

TERROR VAMPIRE SPECIAL ABILITIES

HD	Abilities
1-2	Dancing lights 3/day, ghost sound 3/day
3-4	Cause fear 3/day, disguise self 3/day
5-6	Silent image 3/day
7-8	Displacement, misdirection
9-10	Hallucinatory terrain, greater invisibility 3/day
11-12	Fear 3/day, phantasmal killer
13-14	Nightmare, seeming
15-16	Mirage arcana
17-18	Mislead, programmed image
19-20	Project image

points in combat, it automatically assumes gaseous form and attempts to escape. It must reach its coffin home within 2 hours or be utterly destroyed. (It can travel up to 9 miles in 2 hours.) Any additional damage dealt to a vampire forced into gaseous form has no effect. Once at rest in its coffin, a vampire is helpless. It regains 1 hit point after 1 hour, then is no longer helpless and resumes healing at the rate of 5 hit points per round.

Gaseous Form (Su): As a standard action, a terror vampire can assume *gaseous form* at will as the spell (caster level 5th), but it can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability.

Resistances (Ex): A terror vampire has resistance to cold 10 and fire 10.

Spell-like Abilities: A terror vampire with a Charisma score of 8 or higher has one or more spell-like abilities, depending on its Hit Dice, as indicated on the Terror Vampire Special Abilities table. The abilities are cumulative; a derro terror vampire (3 HD) can use *dancing lights*, *disguise self*, and *ghost sound* each 3 times per day. Unless otherwise noted, an ability is usable once per day. Caster level equals the creature's HD, and the save DC is Charisma-based.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A terror vampire has +4 turn resistance.

Vampiric Repression (Su): A terror vampire can repress all of its

vampiric traits and abilities and appear to be a normal mortal for a number of rounds equal to twice its Charisma modifier every day (minimum 2). During this time, the vampire is unaffected by its normal vampiric weaknesses but also loses the benefits of its special attacks and qualities. For example, a terror vampire trying to pass as a normal mortal could use this ability to stand in full daylight, but during this time it would lose its special attacks, fast healing, and similar abilities. The terror vampire is still undead even while this power is in effect, and as such it can be turned as normal. This ability also does not deceive spells like *detect undead*. A terror vampire can activate and deactivate this ability as a free action and may use it any number of times per day as long as the number of rounds it is used does not exceed twice its Charisma modifier.

Feats: Terror vampires gain Alertness, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, and Persuasive as bonus feats, assuming the base creature meets the prerequisites and doesn't already have these feats.

Skills: Terror vampires have a +8 racial bonus on Bluff, Hide, Intimidate, Listen, Move Silently, Search, Sense Motive, and Spot checks. Otherwise same as the base creature.

Advancement: By character class.

Level Adjustment: Same as the base creature +10. ☐



HORRORS OF THE DAELKYR

Six Minions and Mutants of the Masters of Madness



by Nicholas Herold • illustrated by Eric Dechamps

The world of Eberron sits enfolded within the Astral Plane. Orbiting around it like moons are thirteen other planes: planes of embodied elements and ideals, of alien worlds and strange vistas.

One of these planes—Xoriat, the Realm of Madness—is a never-ending series of infinite membranous layers. Massive beings and eldritch cities of alien geometry drift through the plane, along with tentacled vegetation growing alongside twitching insectlike creatures. The sheer madness of the plane can break the minds of any who visit it. The lords of this madness are the daelkyr.

The daelkyr are off-putting in their beauty—and even more so in their insanity. Consumed with a desire to impress their mad will on all of creation, they once yearned for an unspoiled world to ravage and for rational creatures to shape into their own deranged ideals.

Nine thousand years ago, the daelkyr got their chance.

Xoriat drew into a coterminous orbit around Eberron, allowing the daelkyr and their chosen minions to spill out onto the region now known as the Shadow Marches. In those days before the reign of men, the Dhaakani Empire of the goblinoids controlled most of the continent. With those raw materials, the daelkyr went to work: fusing goblins into brutish dolgrims, and transforming hobgoblins into foul dolgaunts. These and countless other creations are the legacy of the daelkyr.

After building an army large enough to conquer the continent, the daelkyr waged war with Khorvaire's peoples. Four millennia later, the Dhaakani Empire shattered—ruined as

much by civil strife and infighting as by the aberrant horrors at its gates.

Thus entered the Gatekeepers. A sect of druids living peacefully within the great forests of the Eldeen Reaches, the Gatekeepers used dimensional seals to forever sever Xoriat from Eberron. The armies of the orcs and surviving goblinoids drove back the remaining daelkyr, forcing them to retreat into the comforting darkness of Khyber.

For millennia the daelkyr have waited, busying themselves with crafting new monstrosities and calling together cults devoted to their cruel insanity. They wait for the time when the seals break, when the madness of Xoriat once again overwhelms Eberron.

Byshek Weaponry

Many of these creatures have damage reduction overcome by byshek. This rare, purplish metal is prized for use in jewelry and weapons. A bludgeoning weapon whose head is made of byshek has a +1 enhancement bonus on damage rolls. (This bonus does not stack with an enhancement bonus provided by magic.) The market price of a byshek weapon is +1,500 gp. Byshek is difficult to work into armor, and offers no significant advantage over iron armor.

Byshek has hardness 17 and 35 hit points per inch of thickness. An item made out of byshek weighs 50% more than the same item made of iron. Byshek increases the DC of Craft checks to create or repair byshek armor by 8 and the DC of Craft checks to create or repair byshek weapons or other items by 5.

Akleu

This grotesque, hunched creature has a translucent body such that only the outlines of its bones, a few purplish organs, and its beady black eyes are easily spotted. Emaciated and skeletal, its long arms and legs seem to contain too many joints, bending at odd angles with an eerie fluidity. The creature's hands and feet each end in four long clawed digits and its head is shaped like that of a shark—flat and wedge-shaped.

AKLEU

CR 8

Always NE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar)

Init +11 **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low light vision; **Spot** +15, **Listen** +2

Languages Daelkyr, Undercommon

AC 22, touch 17, flat-footed 15; uncanny dodge (+7 Dex, +5 natural)

Miss Chance 40% (transparent)

hp 75 (10 HD); **DR** 10/byshek

Resist evasion

Fort +10, **Ref** +14, **Will** +9

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares), climb 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +17 (1d6+3) and bite +15 (2d4+1 plus poison)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +12

Atk Options pounce, poison (DC 18, 1d6 Dex/2d6 Dex), sneak attack +3d6

Abilities Str 16, Dex 25, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 11

Feats Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Track, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +22, Climb +28, Escape Artist +20, Hide +28, Jump +26, Listen +2, Move Silently +20, Spot +15, Survival +15, Tumble +22, Use Rope +7 (+9 bindings)

Advancement 11–18 HD (Medium), 19–27 HD (Large), or by character class; **Favored Class** rogue

Level Adjustment —

Uncanny Dodge (Ex) An akleu retains its Dexterity bonus to Armor Class even if caught flat-footed.

Transparent (Ex) An akleu is nearly invisible, making it very difficult to hit. Any melee or ranged attack

made against an akleu has a 40% miss chance unless the attacker can pinpoint the akleu by methods other than sight. *True seeing* and *glitterdust* reveal the akleu and negate its miss chance, but *see invisibility* does not.

Evasion (Ex) If exposed to an effect that normally allows a Reflex save for half damage, an akleu takes no damage on a successful save.

Pounce (Ex) When an akleu charges, it can make a full attack.

Poison (Ex) The bite of an akleu injects a painful toxin. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Sneak Attack (Ex) Any time an akleu's opponent is denied its Dexterity bonus to Armor Class, or when an opponent is flanked by an akleu, the akleu deals an extra 3d6 points of damage on a successful melee attack.

Skills An akleu uses its Dexterity bonus in place of its Strength bonus when making Climb checks, receives a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks, and can take 10 on any Climb check, even if rushed or threatened. An akleu's transparent body gives the creature a +8 bonus on Hide checks.

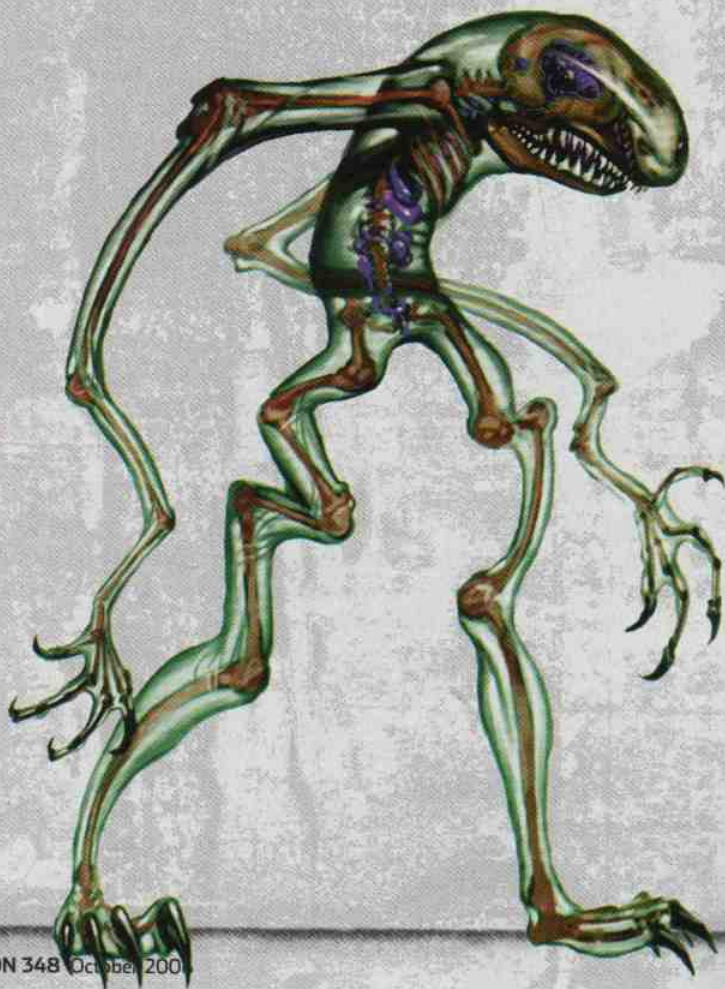
Akleu are vicious pack hunters native to Xoriat. Imported by the daelkyr millennia ago to serve as assassins, some are now trapped on Eberron, killing without mercy to satisfy their twisted desires.

Strategy and Tactics

Akleu prefer to attack from ambush, striking quickly with tooth and nail, and then dragging away victims to be skinned and consumed. If given the option, an akleu strikes out at a single target and avoids creatures in heavy armor. Packs of akleu work together to flank a single target and tear it apart.

Ecology

Although intelligent, akleu have little in terms of society. They are nomadic creatures, preferring to roam from place to place in search of prey. Some are solitary predators and other form packs of up to eight individuals. Pack life is similar to that



of lions: a dominant male reserves mating rights to several females, who do the majority of the hunting. Young mature quickly, growing to adulthood within a year. The majority of akleu have left the service of the daelkyr, a development the daelkyr do not mourn. The presence of the akleu merely serves to remind the daelkyr of their long-lost plane. Still, an akleu can be a useful minion, and more than one has found itself killing for the Cults of the Dragon Below (see *DRAGON* #332).

Environment: Originally native to forests of writhing trees in Xoriat, the preferred habitat of an akleu on Eberron is full of places to climb, hide, and prepare ambushes, such as in twisting cavern complexes, deep canyons, and even large cities such as Sharn. In cities, their gruesome handiwork is frequently mistaken for the depredations of more mundane killers, as the akleu hide deep underground or in abandoned towers between kills.

Typical Physical Characteristics: If they stood erect, akleu would easily reach 6 feet tall. They remain ever stooped and hunched, however, and frequently crawl on all four legs. An adult akleu weighs about 120 pounds.

Alignment: Selfish and intensely vicious by nature, akleu are imbued with the uncaring evil of Xoriat. They are always neutral evil.

Treasure: The natural symmetry of gemstones fascinates akleu, and many collect gems above all other valuables, storing them in pouches sewn from the skins of victims. An akleu has standard treasure for a CR 8 creature—about 3,400 gp—with at least half that amount in gemstones.

Dolgrue

This filthy humanoid creature stands twice as tall as a human. Its mottled pink skin is dotted with bony nodules and plates. Its heavily muscled limbs end in mighty claws and a long, thin tail trails behind it. The creature's

head is distorted and bestial, with a long muzzle packed with several rows of teeth, but its ears and nose are reminiscent of a bugbear's.

DOLGRUE

CR 4

Usually CE Large aberration

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +8

Languages Undercommon

AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15
(-1 size, +6 natural)

hp 60 (6 HD); fast healing 3; **DR** 5/byshek or magic

SR 18

Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee 2 claws +9 (1d6+6 plus pain) and bite +7 (1d8+3)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +14

Atk Options improved grab, pain, rake
1d6+3

Abilities Str 22, Dex 11, Con 20, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 7

Feats Alertness, Diehard^B, Multiattack, Toughness

Skills Listen +7, Spot +8

Advancement by character class;

Favored Class barbarian

Level Adjustment +5

Pain (Su) A dolgrue can transfer the pain of its very existence to an opponent. Any creature hit by a dolgrue's claw attack must make a DC 18 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Creatures immune to nonlethal damage are immune to a dolgrue's pain touch. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Improved Grab (Ex) In order to use this ability, a dolgrue must hit a Medium or smaller opponent with a claw attack. It can then make a grapple check as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it can make rake attacks.

Rake (Ex) Attack bonus +8, 1d6+3 damage. A dolgrue can rake a grappled foe with both claws without penalty.

Feat A dolgrue is such a tenacious opponent that it continues to fight without penalty when disabled or dying. It gains Diehard as a bonus feat.

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Created from bugbear stock, dolgrues acted as heavy warriors in the daelkyr armies, bred for the sole purpose of mindless destruction. As a cruel side-effect of their magical transformation, dolgrues live in a state of constant, unrelievable agony.

Strategy and Tactics

Dolgrues revel in the chaos of battle, grabbing foes in their claws and tearing them to pieces. They are incapable of complex strategy and rarely listen to the commands of their superiors unless magically compelled to do so.

Ecology

Dolgrues have little society of their own and are usually kept as guards for enclaves of dolgaunts and other clever servants of the daelkyr. They have no concept of an existence not spent fighting and only parley if given a very good reason (like the promise of something more interesting to kill). When left to their own devices, dolgrues live in small nomadic bands of up to twenty individuals, torturing and eating anything that crosses their paths in the vain

hope of easing their own horrendous pain. They are strict carnivores.

Environment: Dolgrues can be found anywhere their grim masters have need of them. Left alone, they roam the lightless depths of Khyber.

Typical Physical Characteristics: The average dolgrue stands about 10 feet tall and weighs nearly 400 pounds. Dolgrues usually wear no more clothing than rotting furs and tattered rags scavenged from their victims. They constantly mutter obscenities in Undercommon and groan in agony.

Alignment: Stupid, angry, and in perpetual agony, dolgrues tend heavily toward chaotic evil, seeking to ruin all things. A few dolgrues—usually the more intelligent ones—find a way to put aside their unending hate and become either chaotic neutral or neutral evil. Good and lawful dolgrues, however, are unheard of.

Treasure: Dolgrues have little use for treasure, keeping only half the amount of treasure as standard for a CR 4 creature, roughly 600 gp.

Dolgrues as Characters

Most dolgrues advance as barbarians, which is their favored class, although a few become fighters or rogues. In extremely rare situations dolgrues might learn the ways of the adept or cleric of the Dragon Below, but generally only when more intelligent beings, like illithids or kyra, manipulate them.

Kyra

This bizarre creature is a massive brain, buoyed on eight twitching membranous wings and covered in vibrating cilia. A long tentacle in the shape of a spinal cord dangles from the brain-thing's base, and four smaller tentacles, nestled among its wings, writhe constantly. Humanoid figures appear on its surface, pulsing slightly as if struggling to break free.

KYRA

CR 11

Always NE Huge outsider (evil, extraplanar)

Init +7; **Senses** blind, blindsight

360 ft., Spot +3, Listen +18

Aura profane aura (30 ft., Will DC 21)

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 26*, touch 17, flat-footed 24

(-2 size, +2 Dex, +8 natural, +5 deflection, +3 Combat Expertise)

hp 138 (12 HD); **DR** 10/byshek or good

Immune cold, gaze attacks, illusions, mind-influencing effects, poison, visual effects

Fort +15, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11

Weakness vulnerability to sunlight

* Includes 3-point adjustment for Combat Expertise feat.

Speed 5 ft. (1 square), fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee Tentacle +16* (1d8+9 plus confusing touch)

Space 15 ft. **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +29

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Flyby

Attack, absorb, confusing touch, constrict 1d8+10, improved grab

Abilities Str 28, Dex 15, Con 24, Int 19,



Wis 16, Cha 21

SQ blind, blindsense, SR 22

Feats Ability Focus (confusing touch), Combat Expertise, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Bluff +20, Diplomacy +24, Hide +9, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Knowledge (history) +19, Knowledge (the planes) +19, Listen +18, Move Silently +17, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +21 (+23 deciphering scrolls), Use Magic Device +20 (+22 scrolls)

Advancement Special (see absorb)

Level Adjustment —

Blind (Ex) A kyra is immune to attack forms that rely on sight, such as gaze attacks, visual effects, and some illusions.

Blindsight (Ex) Thanks to its cilia, a kyra can sense all foes within 360 feet as a sighted creature would. Beyond that range, it treats all targets as having total concealment.

Profane Aura (Su) A kyra radiates a supernatural aura of fear. All creatures within 30 feet of the kyra must make a DC 21 Will save or be affected as though by a *fear* spell (caster level 12th). A creature that successfully saves against the effect cannot be affected by the same kyra's profane aura for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

In addition, the aura grants the kyra a deflection bonus to Armor Class equal to its Charisma modifier.

Absorb (Su) When a kyra slays an intelligent opponent it can absorb the corpse, trapping the dead creature's body and soul within its membranous body as a full-round action. Absorption destroys the victim's body and consumes the soul, preventing any form of raising or resurrection that requires part of the corpse. There is a 50% chance that a *wish*, *miracle*, or *true resurrection* spell can restore a devoured victim to life. Check once for each destroyed creature. If the check fails, the creature cannot be brought back to life by mortal magic.

A kyra advances in Hit Dice by

consuming the corpses of sentient beings (Intelligence of at least 3) in this fashion. Every time a kyra absorbs a number of corpses equal to its current Hit Dice, it gains 1 Hit Die and its Strength, Constitution, and natural armor increase by +1. Its attack bonus and saves improve as normal for an outsider of its Hit Dice, and it gains skill points, feats, and ability score improvements normally.

Confusing Touch (Su) Any creature hit by the tentacle attack of a kyra must make a DC 23 Will save or be *confused*, as per the spell, for 1d4+1 rounds. A creature that successfully saves against the kyra's confusing touch cannot be affected by that kyra's touch for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Constrict (Ex) An opponent grappled by a kyra takes 1d8+9 points of damage every round the kyra maintains the grapple.

Improved Grab (Ex) In order to use this ability, a kyra must hit a Medium or smaller opponent with its tentacle attack. It can then make a grapple check as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it can constrict.

Vulnerability to Sunlight (Ex) A kyra takes 1 point of Constitution damage for every hour it is exposed to sunlight. A kyra reduced to 0 Constitution in this way is utterly destroyed and

cannot be brought back by any means. Lost Constitution points are recovered at the rate of 1 per every 24-hour period spent underground or otherwise sheltered from the sun.

A kyra is an embodiment of the irrational, hateful evil of Xoriat. Trapped on Eberron after the Gatekeepers sealed off the plane of madness forever, kyras now live only for revenge against all life, blaming every other creature in existence for their permanent exile. This includes their former daelkyr masters, whom they loathe with a passion exceeding all others.

Strategy and Tactics

Kyras prefer hit-and-run tactics, grabbing foes in their tentacles then flying out of reach of ranged attacks and spells. They relish taunting enemies telepathically and are skilled at lies and threats made to demoralize opponents. Kyras do not hesitate to sacrifice minions in order to escape, and often carry magic items nestled in their brain folds to aid in combating enemies or make a quick getaway.

Ecology

Kyras despise all life and enjoy crushing any creature that comes within reach of their coils, relishing any chance to absorb life force. Kyras



are masterfully deceptive and tricky creatures, and they revel in acting as false emissaries of the Dragon Below, using their devoted followers to lash out at mortals and daelkyr alike. They often attract the attention of especially bitter and jaded mind flayers, and are occasionally found in the company of the same. They demand tribute from their followers in the form of lives and magic items; the former they absorb and the latter they hoard jealously.

Environment: Kyras avoid the hated sunlight at all costs, living in vast caverns deep underground. Most of them have forever given up any hope of returning to their beloved membranous seas of Xoriat.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A kyra measures about 15 feet in diameter and has a wingspan of almost 50 feet.

Alignment: Kyras hate everything. Consumed with envy and ambition, they are paragons of neutral evil.

Treasure: Kyra have double the regular treasure of a CR 11 creature; about 15,000 gp worth. They prefer magic items, especially wands, scrolls of offensive spells, and teleportation magic. They often collect rings, wearing dozens of them on their thin tentacles (although they still only gain the benefits from the first two magic rings they put on).

Opabinia

This strange creature is covered in slate-blue chitinous plates and crawls on many tiny legs. Its front end is marked with five multifaceted eyes and a long proboscis, tipped with a jagged fanged beak. Its back end is tipped with a series of small fins, like those of a lobster.

OPABINIA

Always N Medium aberration (aquatic)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Listen** +0, **Spot** +5

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; **Dodge** (+2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 19 (3 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (4 squares), swim 30 ft.

Melee bite +5 (1d6+4)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (bite 10 ft.)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +5

Atk Options improved grab, worry 1d6+4

Abilities Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 1,

Wis 12, Cha 5

SQ extended reach, jagged bite

Feats Dodge, Stealthy

Skills Hide +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +7, Swim +11

Advancement 5–8 HD (Medium), 9–12 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment —

Improved Grab (Ex) In order to use this attack, an opabinia must hit a Small or smaller creature with its bite attack. It can then make a grapple check as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it can make worry attacks.

Worry (Ex) An opabinia shakes opponents grabbed in its jaws, dealing 1d6+4 damage every round it maintains the grapple.

Extended Reach (Ex) The mouth of an opabinia sits on a long trunk, granting its bite attack 10-foot reach.

Jagged Bite (Ex) An opabinia's bite leaves terrible tears in the flesh. Damage

CR 2

taken from an opabinia's bite does not heal naturally. Magical healing (such as with cure spells), fast healing, and regeneration work normally.

Skills An opabinia has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line. An opabinia's five eyes grant it a +4 racial bonus on Spot checks.

The opabinia were originally tiny, innocuous marine creatures, but the daelkyr mutated and enlarged them to serve as amphibious attack animals in the assault on Khorvaire.

Strategy and Tactics

Opabinia are fairly unintelligent combatants, grabbing prey with their long mouths and shaking until the morsel stops moving. They favor small prey, but they attack human-sized creatures if desperate or threatened.

Ecology

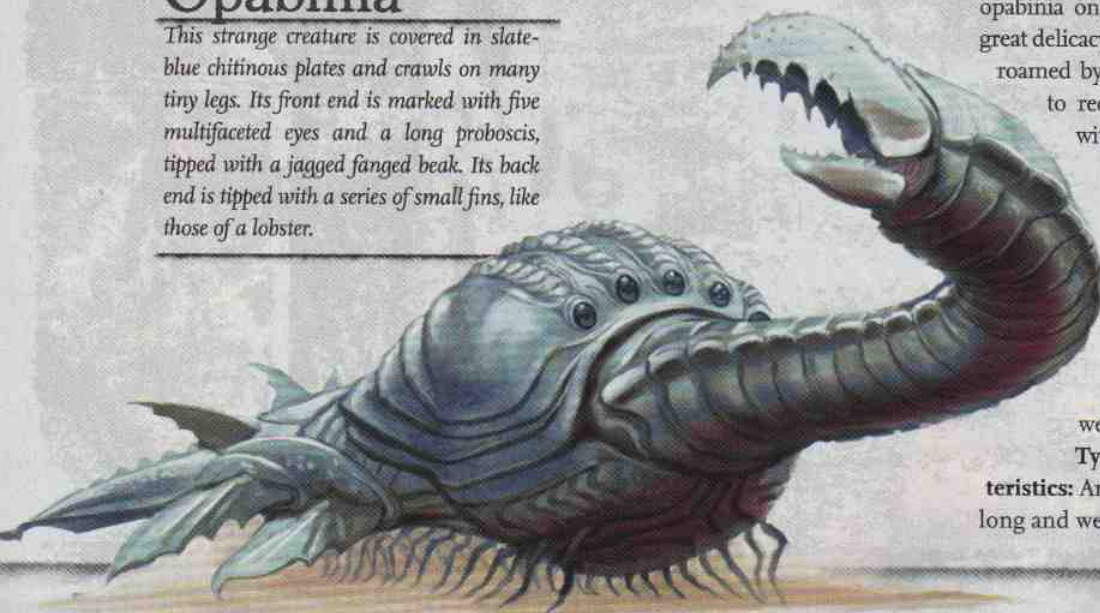
With the daelkyr wars long since over, the opabinia have returned to a wild state, living in oceans and marshes while preying on whatever they can catch. Opabinia are traditionally solitary, but great clusters of up to forty individuals can be found during mating season, competing for the attention of females. Trolls are fond of their flavor and attack opabinia on site, considering them a great delicacy. Dolgaunts living in areas roamed by opabinia have attempted to redomesticate the opabinia, with mixed results.

Environment:

Although opabinia can be found wherever there is water, warmth, and food, they are most common in the saltwater marshes of Torlaac Moor in southwest Darguun.

Typical Physical Characteristics:

An opabinia is about 7 feet long and weighs 250 pounds.



Alignment: Opabinia aren't smart enough to be any alignment other than neutral.

Treasure: Opabinia have no need for treasure. Anything of value found near an opabinia probably belonged to a creature it recently ate.

Xenostelid

This horrible creature stands taller than a two-story building. Its appearance combines features of various insects: a centipede's head and body held erect and lined with twitching appendages, four massive scorpion claws, and eight spidery legs. Several pairs of multifaceted eyes glare balefully from its head, just above several pairs of huge, grinding mandibles.

XENOSTELID

CR 17

Usually CE Huge aberration

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Listen** +29, **Spot** +29

Languages Daelkyr, Undercommon

AC 30, touch 10, flat-footed 28

(-2 size, +2 Dex, +20 natural)

hp 310 (23 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 15/byshek

Immune mind-affecting effects, poison

Fort +16, **Ref** +9, **Will** +16

Speed 60 ft. (12 squares), climb 30 ft.

Melee 4 claws +24 melee (2d6+11/18-20/x3) and bite +22 melee (2d6+16 plus poison)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +17; **Grp** +36

Atk Options Awesome Blow, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, adamantite strike, augmented critical, poison (DC 36; 1d6 Str, Dex, Con; 1d6 Str, Dex, Con), rend 6d6+19, screech (DC 30; 11d6), web (DC 30)

Abilities Str 33, Dex 14, Con 29, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 14

SQ SR 25

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Improved Sunder, Multiattack, Power Attack

Skills Climb +19, Jump +23, Listen +29, Spot +29

Advancement 19-36 HD (Huge), 37-54

HD (Gargantuan)

Level Adjustment —

Poison (Ex) The venom of the xenostelid combines all the most painful aspects of the venom of spiders, centipedes, and scorpions. Fortitude DC 30 negates; initial damage 1d6 Str, 1d6 Dex, and 1d6 Con; secondary damage 1d6 Str, 1d6 Dex, and 1d6 Con.

Adamantine Strike (Ex) A xenostelid's claws count as adamantite weapons for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction and hardness.

Augmented Critical (Ex) A xenostelid's claw attacks threaten a critical hit on a roll of 18-20, dealing x3 damage on a successful critical hit.

Rend (Ex) When a xenostelid hits an opponent with multiple claw attacks, it grabs and tears the flesh. For every two claws that hit a single opponent, the xenostelid deals an extra 6d6+18 damage.

Screech (Su) Three times per day, but no more than once every 1d4 rounds, a xenostelid can emit a horrible shriek as a move action, dealing 11d6 points of sonic damage to all creatures and unattended objects in a 60-foot radius. A DC 30 Fortitude save halves the damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Web (Ex) A xenostelid can throw a web eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 100 feet, with a range increment of 20 feet, and is effective against targets up to Gargantuan size. The web anchors the target in place, trapping the target in its current space.

An entangled creature can escape with a DC 30 Escape Artist check, or a DC 34 Strength check. The check DC is Constitution-based, and the Strength check DC includes a +4 racial bonus. The web has 30 hit points, hardness 5, and takes double damage from fire.

The xenostelid can also create sheets of sticky webbing that coats up to 20 squares (it can choose to coat less). An approaching creature must make a DC 20 Spot check to notice a web or else it stumbles into the web

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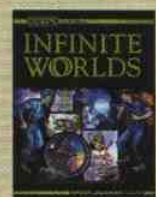


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and becomes trapped. Attempts to escape or burst the webbing receive a +5 bonus if the trapped creature has something to walk on or grab while pulling free. Each 5-foot-square section of webbing has 30 hit points, hardness 5, and takes double damage from fire.

A xenostelid can move across its own sheet web at its climb speed and can determine the exact location of any creature touching the web.

Skills A xenostelid receives a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

Employed by the daelkyr as siege weapons, the foul chimeric creatures known as xenostelids are now—fortunately—quite rare. Despite their monstrous appearance, xenostelids are fairly intelligent and quite cunning, frequently outsmarting those who underestimate their canniness.

Strategy and Tactics

A xenostelid is an amazingly powerful melee combatant that relishes the chance to tear opponents apart with its claws. They use their webbing to immobilize foes and prefer to eliminate spellcasters as soon as possible.

Ecology

Daelkyr created the first xenostelid after dozens of attempts of fusing together monstrous spiders, centipedes, and scorpions. Generations of oversized bugs perished until the resultant creature was stable enough to survive. Since then, xenostelids have bred true. Although usually solitary, mated pairs of xenostelids often nest near each other and come to one another's aid in times of need.

Even though the Daelkyr Wars ended long ago, xenostelids still respect the creatures that created them. Xenostelids worship the daelkyr as deities, obeying their orders without question. Even such powerful creatures as beholders and illithids fear xenostelids, for xenostelids are immune to mind control and are resistant to other spells as well.

Environment: Xenostelids typically live deep within Khyber. They prefer to lair near underground lakes and rivers, where prey is abundant.

Typical Physical Characteristics: The smallest and most common xenostelids stand about 30 feet tall and weigh 6 tons, but they can grow much larger.

Alignment: Cunning but obsessively destructive, xenostelids are almost always chaotic evil. They seek to devour any creature weaker than themselves.

Treasure: Xenostelids like shiny, brightly colored objects and have typical treasure for their CR—about 36,000 gp worth. Unless instructed in their use by a daelkyr, a xenostelid does not use magic items it owns.



Xorbeast

This slimy corpulent hulk stands twice as tall as a human and glistens with a sickly rainbow of colors. It stands on four appendages that could charitably be called legs, each ending in a sucker-tipped stump. Two more appendages grow from its back, each culminating in a sphincterlike mouth.

XORBEAST

CR 7

Usually NE Large aberration

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Spot** +7, **Listen** +8

Aura frightful presence (60-ft. radius, DC 13)

Languages understands Undercommon

AC 19, **touch** 9, **flat-footed** 19

(–1 size, +10 natural)

hp 76 (8 HD); **fast healing** 3; **DR** 10/slashing or piercing

Immune acid and sonic

Resist cold 10, fire 10

Fort +9, **Ref** +2, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), **climb** 15 ft.

Melee 2 slams +12 melee (1d6+7)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +6; **Grapple** +17

Atk Options Power Attack, engulf, temporal stasis

Abilities Str 24, Dex 11, Con 20, Int 3, Wis 14, Cha 9

SQ amorphous

Feats Ability Focus (frightful presence), Great Fortitude, Power Attack

Skills Climb +15, **Listen** +8, **Spot** +7

Advancement 9–16 HD (Large), 17–24 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment —

Frightful Presence (Ex) The sheer bulk of a xorbeast is frightening and unsettling. Any creature within 60 feet of a charging or attacking xorbeast must make a DC 13 Will save or be shaken for 5d6 rounds. A creature that makes this save is immune to the frightful presence of that xorbeast for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Engulf (Ex) A xorbeast can mow down Medium or smaller creatures as a full round action. It cannot make slam attacks during a round in which it engulfs. The xorbeast merely has to move over the opponents, affecting

as many as it can cover. Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against the xorbeast, but if they do so they are not entitled to a saving throw. Those who do not attempt attacks of opportunity must succeed on a DC 21 Reflex save or be engulfed; on a success, they are pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the xorbeast moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to the xorbeast's temporal stasis, and are considered to be grappled and trapped within its body. The save DC is Strength based. A xorbeast can hold up to two Medium, four Small, eight Tiny, or sixteen Diminutive or smaller creatures.

Temporal Stasis (Su) A creature engulfed by a xorbeast must make a DC 18 Fortitude save or be held in *temporal stasis*, as the spell, for 2d4 minutes. A daelkyr within 30 feet can dismiss the effect as a free action. Creatures that successfully save against the temporal stasis of a xorbeast are immune to that xorbeast's temporal stasis for 24 hours. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Amorphous (Ex) The gelatinous body of a xorbeast protects it from attacks against vital organs. Any critical hit or sneak attack made against a xorbeast has a 50% chance of dealing damage as a normal attack.

Skills A xorbeast receives a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

Xorbeasts are glutinous horrors bred by the daelkyr to bring them fodder for experimentation.

Strategy and Tactics

Xorbeasts attack from ambush, dropping on top of victims from cave ceilings or trees. They begin battle by engulfing as many creatures as they can hold. Once laden with temporally trapped victims, they retreat. Until filled, they pummel foes with their pseudopods and attempt further engulf attacks each round if able.

BUT I'M NOT RUNNING EBERRON!

The creatures presented within this article are easily used by DMs not running their games in **EBERRON**. The akleu, kyra, and xorbeasts work well as outsiders from a neutral-evil plane, such as Carceri or Hades in the core cosmology, but they'd be better suited to the Far Realm (see *DRAGON* #330 for more information). The dolgrues, opabinia, and xenostelids all make for good generic aberrations.

If you wish to use these creatures but don't want to introduce the byshek weapon material into your game, change their damage reduction to another material type. Silver has been previously used in place of byshek outside of the **EBERRON** (such as with the runehound from *Monster Manual III*), but more exotic materials like darkwood or mithral might prove effective as well.

Ecology

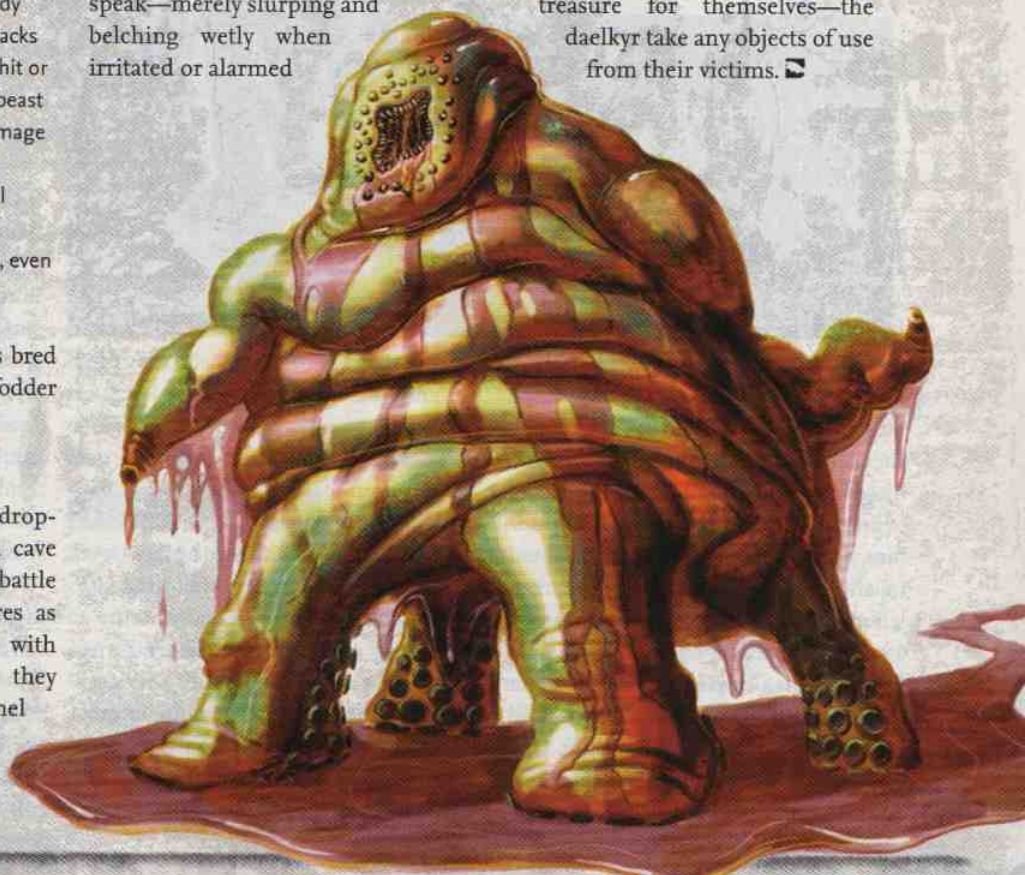
Xorbeasts are repulsive even to the daelkyr but act as highly useful minions. Xorbeasts serve no part in any normal ecology, instead existing only to toil for the daelkyr by collecting humanoids and animals to act as raw materials for their experiments and transformations. They have no need for food, seeming to absorb whatever nutrition they need by holding helpless victims within themselves. A xorbeast that cannot trap and hold at least one Medium creature per week slowly withers and dies. Xorbeasts cannot reproduce and do not speak—merely slurping and belching wetly when irritated or alarmed.

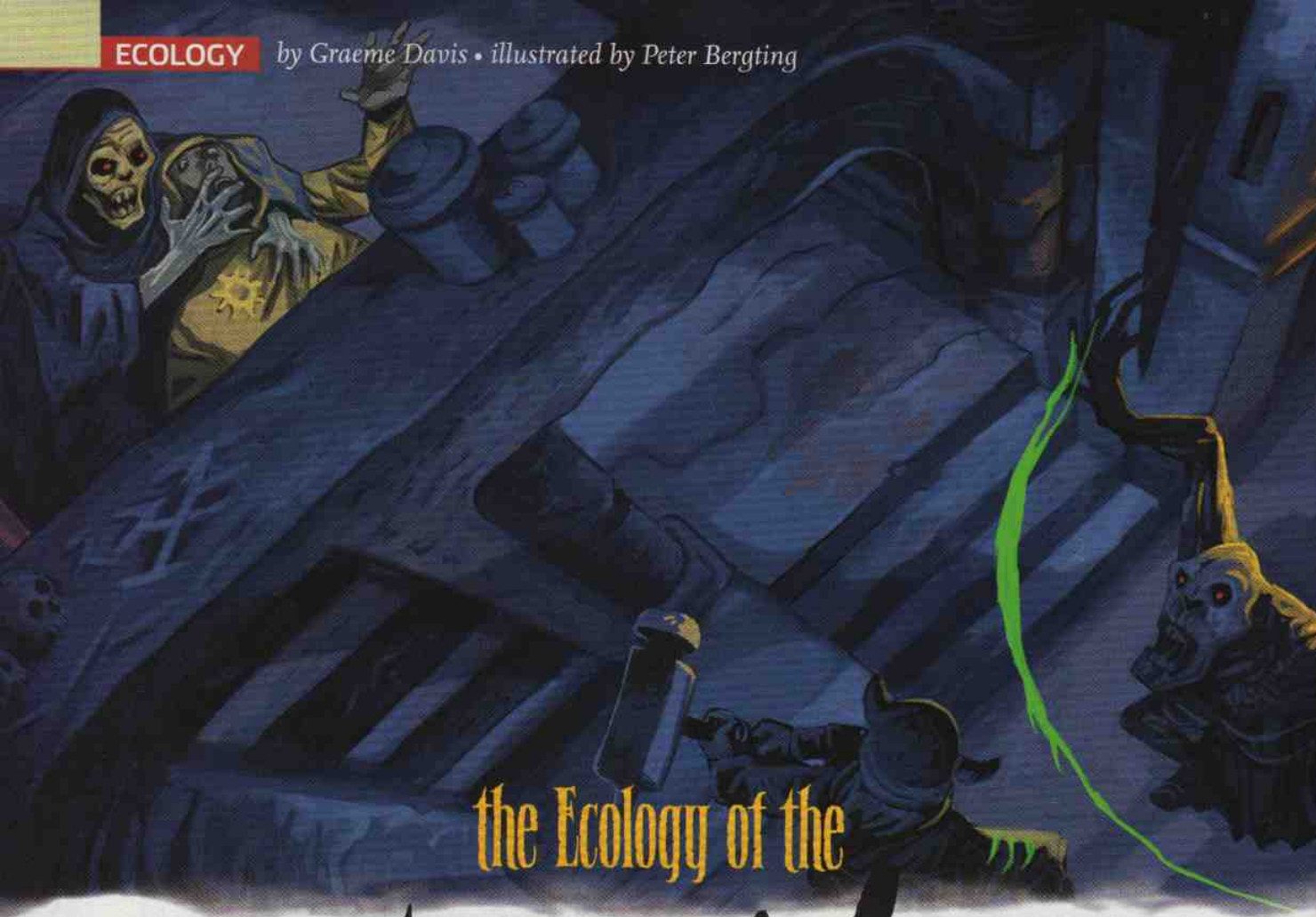
Environment: Xorbeasts are found wherever their evil masters have need of them. This most often means lurking in the endless caverns of Khyber or in the forests of the Eldeen Reaches.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A typical xorbeast stands roughly 10 feet tall and weighs 1,000 pounds. It has greenish skin that constantly weeps a foul oily fluid that shines with all the colors of the rainbow.

Alignment: Xorbeasts are generally neutral evil, fueled only by the whims of their deranged masters.

Treasure: Xorbeasts do not keep treasure for themselves—the daelkyr take any objects of use from their victims. ■





the Ecology of the

wight

Among all the fell creatures of creation, few inspire greater horror than the walking dead. Their very existence violates nature, and in their decomposing bodies we see something of ourselves. They once lived like us, and some day we shall become rotting shells like them—moldering, if lucky, in an unviolated grave.

Some feel pity for skeletons, zombies, and other lesser undead, doomed to the mindless service of evil. Yet, when one looks into dead eyes and sees a spark of malign self-awareness, possessed of an undying hatred for what they once were; when one feels a chill touch colder than death, a touch that robs away life itself, only then does one know the true horror that is the wight.

HISTORY OF THE WIGHT

While even casual scholars of the undead know that wights create more of their kind from those whose life-energy they steal, the ultimate origins of these creatures remains a matter of much debate. There is no known necromantic spell for creating wights and little help comes from the diverse and contradictory legends that seek to explain how the first wights came to exist.

Some believe dark deities sometimes grant the gift of undeath to their favored servants, who continue to serve them throughout eternity, and wights of a theological inclination claim that Orcus, Nerull, or some other evil power created the first of their kind. Others, both living and dead, call the state a curse, stemming from powerfully worded maledictions, punishment for dark deeds, or the result of hatreds and cruelties so strong they refuse to find rest.

The barbarians who live in the foothills of the Winter's Teeth Mountains tell a different tale. These people still bury their dead beneath great mounds of earth and stone, in the manner of their ancestors since time immemorial. To outsiders, the hill folk pridefully explain that the size of these



barrows reflect the glory of those who rest beneath them. Among themselves, though, they argue fiercely and fearfully over the weight of the stone laid upon the buried dead, and whether it will suffice to prevent the body from rising. Many are the tales of warrior chieftains who stubbornly refuse to die and return from their barrows to trouble their living kin. Many, too, are the stories of heroes who set out to try their strength against these mound-dwellers, seeking glory by stealing their treasure, and end up slaves to deathless princes of old.

Elsewhere, ancient scrolls tell of a race of sorcerer-kings who sought to live forever and in doing so made a crucial mistake. They achieved eternal life, but eternal youth eluded them: their minds decayed and bodies died around them, becoming the first wights.

These tales exist across many worlds in endless minor variations, but one

THE REAL HISTORY OF THE WIGHT

Wights in D&D draw mainly upon legends of mound-dwelling undead from Anglo-Saxon and Norse sagas. The Vikings called these vampirelike creatures *haugbui*, meaning "mound-dwellers," and one of the most famous, Karr the Old, appears in *The Saga of Grettir the Strong*. In *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, Tolkien translated *haugbui* into English as "barrow-wight." The word "wight" derives from an Anglo-Saxon word simply meaning "person" or "being," and survives today in the German word *wicht*, sometimes meaning "unpleasant person."

truth remains constant: the living fear the passing of the unrepentantly merciless and malevolent, for death is not always an end.

PHYSIOLOGY OF THE WIGHT

Most wights are humanoid and typically look like a long-dead individual of its original race, with dry, parchmentlike skin drawn tightly over brittle bone. Their fingernails are long, sharp claws and their eyes burn with a malevolent intelligence. Although popular belief associates them with barrow-mounds and other burial places,

scholarly research shows that wights spread across many places, times, and cultures, without favoring a particular race, background, or gender.

Although their bodies are bereft of life, a powerful source of negative energy animates wights. This energy seems internal to their bodies, rather than drawing on animating necromantic magic, some integral relic or phylactery, or tapped from another plane. This self-sufficiency, however, does not afford a wight any special protection and, as with most undead, their reliance upon negative energy makes them vulnerable to

positive energy—typically in the form of turning and holy magic. This fundamental trait also provides them with their best-known and most dreaded power: a deathly cold touch that saps life energy. More than a terrifying attack, this fearful power empowers wights, allowing them to feed off victims' lives, corrupt that vitality, and add it to their own. While wights seem to hunger for life energy, this desire has more in common with an addiction than a need for sustenance, as wights have been known to lie buried or trapped in tombs for centuries with no contact with the living. This leads some to posit that the act of draining life provides wights with a rush of mortality, euphorically reminding them of the existences they lost long ago. The desire to recapture even such fleeting glimpses of the past compels many wights to acts of incredible depravity.

When a wight's energy drain kills a living foe, the wight who delivered the deathblow can command the fallen one to rise as a wight, bound to obey its will. Necromantic scholars agree that the transformation relies upon the negative energy of the wight's touch overcoming and replacing the victim's life energy, but they debate why the newly-created wight is enslaved to its maker. A popular reasoning suggests that the act of creating a new wight imparts a portion of the creator's noxious will upon the victim, causing the newly risen wight to become more an appendage of its creator than the individual it once was.

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIETY OF THE WIGHT

A wight's main psychological characteristic is a burning hatred of the living. The reasons for such enmity vary—a jealous longing for a life long past, a general distrust of the living arising from encounters with tomb-robbers, or simply a cruel disposition lingering from the creature's life—but no wights ever regard living creatures as equals. Mortals might be regarded as slaves to be ruled by fear, cattle to slake the wight's hunger for life-energy, lesser beings to be elevated with the "gift" of undeath, or enemies to be destroyed

KNOWLEDGE OF THE WIGHT

The following table shows the results of a Knowledge (religion) check regarding wights. Those who study necromancy, worship powers of death and the dead, or are well versed in ancient lore might possess this information. At the DM's discretion, characters with the Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (local) skill might know tales of nearby barrows or other places wights might haunt. The wight appears on page 255 of the *Monster Manual*.

Knowledge (religion)

DC Result

- | | |
|----|--|
| 13 | This creature is a wight, an undead being like a zombie but smarter and more powerful. This result reveals all undead traits. |
| 18 | Wights are most often found in barrows and other ancient burial-places. They hate all living creatures and sap the life energy of those they touch. |
| 23 | Cunning and quiet, wights are deft ambushers, intelligent enough to make use of their surroundings and skilled at moving without a sound. |
| 28 | Although savage, wights can often speak Common and might know much about the past. One slain by a wight rises soon after, transformed into a new wight enslaved to its undead murderer's will. |
| 33 | Numerous different kinds of wights exist—some with strange powers over death and decay and others being stronger than even ancient lichs. |

on sight, but they are never highly regarded and never trusted.

The basic unit of wight society consists of a master or mistress wight and its spawn. Highly territorial, wights rarely venture far from their burial-places or the lands they knew in life, unless commanded to do so under duress. Exceptions do exist, however. Some wight bands, like the Reavers of Arkenfell, consist of notorious robbers and pirates who became undead together, through the curse of a slain high priestess. Similar groups might travel widely, perhaps out of habit, in search of a cure, or to engage in life-hungry rampages.

In barbarian lands, a common organization for wights mimics that of a barbarian chieftain and his warband. The strongest wight rules, and the others serve as warriors, with the weakest relegated to menial roles. Rare promotion occurs by displays of prowess, just as in many barbarian cultures. As such cultural mockeries often occur in secluded burial places, elevation through such largely arbitrary ranks happens rarely or at the whim of the chieftain.

Spawned wights are usually regarded as inferior to those who rose spontaneously—or by the favor of the gods, as many see it. Spawn are defeated enemies, after all, so they toil as servants

or slaves until they prove themselves by their deeds. Although many spawned wights hate their masters, their murderer's fundamental control prevents them from rising against him. Thus, mock challenges and duels prove the most common means for these lesser wights to gain status.

Wight spellcasters often command awe and respect. Some—especially those found in lost temples or large tomb complexes—regard themselves as the favored servants of various dark powers. Wights with clerical abilities prove more common than arcane spellcasters, although both are rarities. Other wights seem indifferent to religion, prizing only their own strength and ability.

Scholars still debate why wights prefer to dwell in tombs. One theory maintains that they find such funereal surroundings a welcome reminder of their condition—perhaps as a source of pride, rather than sorrow. Others point out that the dark, winding, and cramped quarters of a tomb complex give the wights who dwell there a significant tactical advantage by allowing them to approach intruders stealthily, using the shadows and wandering passages to cover their deadly approach. Some wights might also simply long for death, meditating in their tombs on their final



having to advance under fire from spellcasters or ranged weapons. Labyrinths of short passages allow a pack of wights to surround intruders and attack from all sides, their Hide and Move Silently skills affording them a high chance of surprising interlopers. Cleverly employed shifting walls and pits dropping to lower levels are also frequently used to confuse and disorient outsiders.

ALTERNATIVE LAIRS

Wights are not only found in dark barrows on lonely, mist-wrapped moors, but might arise in any number of far-flung houses of the dead.

Al'hammadah: A hidden valley in the Desert of Al'hammadah conceals an extensive tomb complex constructed by the ancestors of the region's savage nomads. Adventurers who expect to find mummies here are often surprised to encounter linen-wrapped wights and dust wights, their bandages purposefully confusing their true nature. From this morbid palace it is said that an undead despot known as the Black Pharaoh holds court and somehow controls the desert winds.

Fang Island: Remnants of a lost civilization slowly decay upon the fabled Fang Island. Some catastrophe devastated the society, transforming thousands of living souls into life-hungry wights. Any hapless wayfarers who set foot upon the island find themselves drawn into a morbid game of cat and mouse. The wights quickly disable any watercraft or other means of escape from the island and then pick off stragglers or scouts to reduce the visitors' numbers and strengthen their own forces before mounting an all-out attack by night. Thus, it is well known that anyone who ventures to Fang Island never returns.

Ice Soul: From a frozen throne deep within a hoary catacomb the winter-wight Virmaxis rules a kingdom of ice-encrusted dead and enslaved lichs. Having captured the phylacteries of these lichs in ice, the wight orders that they scour the world for unique magical creatures and creations to fill his glacial museum of arcane curiosities. It is said that the winterwight's

freedom from the mortal world, reacting to any distraction or interruption with frustrated rage. Despite their association in many people's minds with ancient barrow-fields on mist-shrouded moors, wights might arise anywhere the living place their dead. There are even rumors of aquatic varieties, related to wights as lacedons are related to ghouls, inhabiting shipwrecks and dangerous reefs in some places. With no need to breathe, though, it is entirely possible such tales stem from waterlogged wights encountered at the bottom of the sea.

WIGHT LAIRS

Unless under the command of a necromancer, more powerful undead, or some other master, wights normally lair in tombs. As their traditional name (barrow wights) suggests, they often lurk in earthen burial mounds,

but they might make their lairs in any kind of tomb complex or necropolis. (Chapter 7 of *Libris Mortis* presents several maps well suited to serve as wight lairs, particularly those on pages 169 and 179.) A wight lair usually serves as the original burial-place of the oldest wight in the pack, sometimes known as the master wight (or other pompous title), who is served by less powerful undead and his own spawn.

Wight lairs are usually cramped, dark places where the wights can pick off enemies one by one, leisurely draining their life energy and turning them against their former comrades as newly reborn wight spawn. Narrow passages hamper weapon-using intruders and favor unarmed wights. These cunning undead use their knowledge of their lair's layout, along with secret doors and passages, to spring close-quarters attacks without

labyrinthine collection includes a piece of the *regalia of neutrality*, a copy of the infamous *Demonomicon of Iggwilv*, and the titanic first owlbear, frozen but still very much alive. Other rumors claim that Virmaxis is not his own master, and that he in turn serves a more powerful being hailing from a doomed place called Moil.

WIGHTS IN EBERRON

In Droaam, the Daughters of Sora Kell maintain a force of wights to impose their will. Organized into warbands of ten to twenty individuals, they serve the annis Sora Katra, whose barbarian heritage commands respect and fosters mutual understanding.

During the Last War, the Karrnathi military experimented with wights as

WIGHTBLADE [MONSTROUS]

You can use your energy drain attack while using a melee weapon.

Prerequisite: Energy drain ability.

Benefit: On a successful melee hit against a living opponent, you may use your energy drain ability in addition to dealing normal damage for your weapon.

Normal: You may only use your energy drain ability when you strike with your natural weapons.

troops, following the success of their programs to create enhanced skeletons and zombies. While superior as combat troops, wights were harder to control and more prone to regard all living humanoids as the enemy, including nearby Karrnathi warriors. The Ministry of the Dead trained a few small groups of wights as potent commando teams, and with the end of the war they face an uncertain future. The government has announced the demobilization of all undead troops, but rumors persist that a strategic reserve

remains in secret locations around the country.

WIGHTS IN EBERON

In ancient times, barrow burial proved common among human societies across most of north-western Faerûn. Today, the best-known barrow-fields can be found on the Moonshae Islands, the Dalelands (particularly Battledale, Deepingdale, and Shadowdale), and Rashemen, with wights occasionally rising to trouble the living.

The Battle of Bones in the Western Heartlands serves as the most prolific source of wights (and many other kinds of undead), but they might be found haunting any ancient tomb complexes or serving powerful necromancers.

ADVANCED WIGHTS

Besides advancing them by Hit Dice or adding class levels, there are a number of ways to create more powerful and unique encounters using wights. Often, this simply means choosing the right wight for the job. Omitting the basic CR 3 wight presented on page 255 of the *Monster Manual*, the following list compiles a number of optional wights from disparate sources.

Dust Wight: From page 47 of *Monster Manual III*, these wights possess the earth subtype and lack the typical abilities of most other wights to drain energy and create spawn. Instead, these CR 7 creatures siphon life from metal and stone and can petrify any creature that draws too near them.

Gravewight Template: From page 31 of the adventure *The Standing Stone*, this early third-edition template provides the abilities of a wight to any humanoid, giant, or monstrous humanoid. See the King Beneath the Hill for an example.



Lavawight: A CR 23 menace from page 200 of the *Epic-Level Handbook*, this fiery twin of the winterwight burns anything that comes near and can permanently drain a creature's hit points.

Slaughter Wight: With the increased ability to deal critical hits and an inescapable craving for life force, these CR 8 wights appear on page 121 of *Libris Mortis*.

Vilewight: Appearing on page 183 of the *Book of Vile Darkness* (mature audiences only), this CR 8 wight attacks with blasts of dark energy, ravenous animate intestines, and a disease that prevents the afflicted from seeing the living.

Wight Template: Found on page 136 of *Savage Species*, this template allows DMs to turn any humanoid into a wight.

Winterwight: A frozen skeleton crowned by a ring of black flame, this CR 23 terror from page 227 the *Epic-Level Handbook* possesses a range of freezing defenses, incredible speed, and the devastating blightfire ability, which drains Constitution over several rounds.

While they can advance by Hit Dice, leaders often have class levels. The rogue class complements a wight's stealth skills, and the wight's energy drain ability produces a devastating sneak attack. With their intelligence, spellcasting wights are not unheard of, but most prize fighting ability above all other skills, resulting in a preponderance of fighter, ranger, and even blackguard wights.

Several accessories also prove particularly useful when advancing wights, most notably: *Libris Mortis*, with its evolved undead template and feats like Improved Energy Drain, Life Drain, and Spell Drain enhance a wights' energy drain ability; *Monster Manual II* and the spellstitched template; and *Savage Species's* emancipated spawn prestige class.

SAMPLE ADVANCED WIGHT

In the fertile highlands, tales of the King Beneath the Hill have circulated for centuries, telling of a time long past when an iron-hearted tyrant ruled over

the people with cruelty and fear. Upon his passing, the people buried him deep within a mound of black stone, part barrow crypt and part prison to bind his evil should it ever find its way back from the land of the dead. Even now, the Black Barrow stands as a shunned site of dread and dark magic, where some say they've heard hollow howls and terrible commands echoing from within. What none remember, though, is that the ancient tyrant was no man, but a malicious storm giant outcast, who a rebellious people bound and buried alive within his black tomb. As the fiend raged and starved, buried alive, his foul will fended off the hand of death, transforming him into a titanic wight that still struggles against his rusting bindings today. Woe to any who intrude upon the resting place of the ancient king and release him from his centuries-old prison, for to free him is to unleash the rage of ages.

THE KING BENEATH THE HILL CR 14

Storm giant gravewight
LE Huge undead

Init +7; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +15, Spot +25

Aura fear aura (sight, Will DC 23)

AC 35, touch 11, flat-footed 32
(-2 size, +3 Dex, +16 natural, +8 armor)

hp 123 (19 HD); **DR** 2/bludgeoning

Immune electricity

Resist cold 20, fire 10

Fort +17, **Ref** +8, **Will** +13

Spd 35 ft. (7 squares), swim 30 ft.

Melee +2 unholy greatsword +30
(3d6+16 plus energy drain) or
slam +28 (1d6+16 plus energy drain)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +14; **Grp** +36

Atk Options Awesome Blow, Improved
Bull Rush, Power Attack

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th)

1/day—*call lightning* (DC 17), *chain lightning* (DC 20)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th)

2/day—*control weather*, *levitate*

Abilities Str 43, Dex 16, Con —, Int 16,
Wis 20, Cha 19

SQ Freedom of movement, rock catching,
turn resistance +4, undead traits

Feats Awesome Blow, Blindfight, Cleave,
Combat Reflexes, Improved Bull
Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved
Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack

Skills Climb +22, Concentration +20,
Craft (any one) +13, Diplomacy +6,
Intimidate +14, Jump +26, Listen
+15, Move Silently +11, Perform
(sing) +14, Sense Motive +15, Spot
+25, Swim +20*

Possessions +3 *breastplate*, +2 *unholy greatsword*, jewelry and adornments worth 3,000 gp

Energy Drain (Su) Living creatures hit by the King Beneath the Hill's slam attack gain one negative level. The DC is 23 for the Fortitude save to remove a negative level. The save DC is Charisma-based. For each such negative level bestowed, the King Beneath the Hill gains 5 temporary hit points.

Fear Aura (Su) Any viewer who sees the King Beneath the Hill must succeed on a DC 23 Will save or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds. Whether or not the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by the King Beneath the Hill's despair ability for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Frightful Presence (Su) Whenever the King Beneath the Hill attacks, its target must make a DC 23 Will save or become frightened (if 4 HD or fewer) or shaken (if more than 4 HD) for 4d6 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Freedom of Movement (Su) The King Beneath the Hill has a continuous *freedom of movement* ability as the spell (caster level 20th). The effect can be dispelled, but the gravewight can create it again on its next turn as a free action.

Skills The King Beneath the Hill has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

*Storm giants ignore weight penalties for gear carried when swimming. ☐

The Adventure Begins

by Jason Bulmahn, James Jacobs, and Erik Mona
illustrated by Ben Wootten

With the rise of the Savage Tide, this article series presents you, the player, with the tips, tricks, and tools necessary to survive it. While the pages of *DUNGEON* magazine present DMs with every vile plot and cunning monster needed to run the Savage Tide, *DRAGON* is here to make sure you don't get swept away. This month's installment gives you an overview of the series, a brief tour of the starting city of Sasserine, and a guide to some of its more important affiliations.

Savage Tidings Overview

Over the next year, each Savage Tiding will present a wide variety of options and information to enrich your game, from feats and spells to regional guides and character ideas. This series is broken down into a number of components, appearing when appropriate to the flow of the Adventure Path. The primary components are as follows.

What Do You Know: The purpose of this section is to give you a basic understanding of your surroundings and enemies. You can consider all of the information given in this component common knowledge, known by almost everyone who takes an interest in the given subject.

Regional Guide: In the first few installments, this component presents you with information about the region around the adventure. Since these areas are well-known and all of this information is easy to obtain and readily available. More mysterious and unexplored environments do not have corresponding regional guides.

Replacement PCs: Characters die, and while the first characters are deeply tied to the events of the Adventure Path, new characters introduced later might have little to work with. This section gives you a bit of backstory and context to work your new character into the ongoing adventure.

New Rules: This component presents new rules and features your character might gain access to throughout the Adventure Path. New types of animal companions, gear, and spells might all find their way into this component.

Affiliations: Affiliations are powerful organizations that your character might belong to. In addition to giving you a rich background, these groups also give you tasks to help you rise within the affiliation and grant you boons upon reaching specific ranks. Affiliations originally appeared in *Player's Handbook II* and any number of the samples presented there might also work in the Adventure Path.

Affiliation Updates: Updating the existing affiliations and giving information about their inner workings, these updates might alter the benefits and responsibilities of each organization, customizing them to new environments and granting members special opportunities.

Adventure Tie: Since many of these articles contain information about their concurrent adventure it would be

best for you to reserve future installments until your character reaches that adventure. Your DM can help you in this regard and each installment notes which adventure the article is connected to.

What Do You Know: Sasserine

The City of Sasserine lies perched on the edge of the known world, the last stop before the endless expanse of the Amedio Jungle. It is a hub for trade and home to more than fifteen thousand souls—a bastion of civilization in a realm plagued by piracy, disease, violent weather, and monsters.

Sasserine itself is governed by a group of seven noble families called the Dawn Council, each representing one of the city's seven districts. Likewise, each district has a common faith shared by many of its citizens. When you create your character, you should bear the nature of your district's nobility and religions in mind, although you aren't required to pick the same deity or ally your interests with those of your council representative.

Sasserine is in every way a city of industry. All seven districts feature large arrays of shops ranging from simple groceries to specialized buildings like potion shops, dagger sellers, exotic pet shops, and magic item bazaars. There is little that cannot be purchased openly somewhere in Sasserine with the exceptions of hard drugs, dangerous monsters, slaves, and other criminal services. Someone who seeks illegal wares can still find them for sale in the city's seedier sections, but this generally requires a DC 15 (or higher) Gather Information check to learn the location of the city's numerous black markets.

Sasserine (Large City): Conventional; AL NG; Population 15,650; 40,000 gp limit; Assets 31,300,000 gp; Mixed (77% human, 6% half-elf, 5% halfling, 4% gnome, 4% dwarf, 2% elf, 1% half-orc, 1% other).

ADVENTURE TIE

This installment of *Savage Tidings* links to the first episode of the Adventure Path, "There is No Honor," presented in *DUNGEON* #139.

All of this information, and plenty more is contained in the *Player's Guide to the Savage Tide*, a 16-page product available to subscribers of either *DRAGON* or *DUNGEON* through paizo.com.

Azure District

The Azure District is Sasserine's true waterfront. Consisting of two sections, the east and the west, the Azure District also houses the majority of the city's lower-class citizens. The western section of the Azure District is primarily concerned with the city's waterways, while the eastern section is where the city's whaling industry is located.

Champion's District

The Champion's District is a district of soldiers, gladiators, and mercenaries who follow in the footsteps of one of the city's founders, the priest of Kord and one-time king, Teraknian. The Champion's District has a not-so-friendly relationship with the Noble District, and citizens see themselves as the rightful leaders of the city.

Cudgel District

The Cudgel District is primarily a residential district. Due to the vigilance of the local watch and the church of St. Cuthbert, it's also the safest district in Sasserine. The citizens of the Cudgel District know this, yet they are not a soft people; they remain ever vigilant to the threat of attack.

Merchant District

Sasserine's heart, and perhaps even its soul, is lodged firmly in its Merchant District. The first district visitors reach, it's often the only district visitors need

ever explore. Little can't be found in the Merchant District's shops and markets, and its taverns host the finest range of food and drink within the city walls (publicly, in any event).

Noble District

Although rule of Sasserine has always been handled in Castle Teraknian, the city's Noble District has traditionally been thought of as the city's ruling district, despite Orren Teraknian's treachery and the resulting years spent under Sea Prince rule. The other districts view the Noble District as a place of decadence and eagerly await the district's fall under its own excesses.

Shadowshore

Although relatively small, Shadowshore is perhaps the most notorious of Sasserine's districts. This strip of land nestled in the shadow of the Champion's District has long been a haven for thieves and criminals of all kind. Generally, the only people who live here are the poor or those who can ably protect their property. The city watch has all but given up on Shadowshore, so long as a general state of peace remains.

Sunrise

Like Cudgel District, Sunrise is primarily residences, yet the citizens of Sunrise are generally a bit better off than their neighbors, in no small part due to the fact that many of them have stakes in the numerous plantations that dot the region surrounding Sasserine.

Affiliations

The following pages detail six affiliations for your characters to join, oppose, or interact with. Your DM is free to add or remove affiliations as needed to suit his campaign and you should check with him before applying to any one of these groups. All of the feats listed in these affiliations with an asterisks (*) appear in the *Player's Guide to the Savage Tide*.

Church of the Whirling Fury



Symbol: A vortex of wind behind a pair of crossed scimitars.

Background, Goals, and Dreams: The Church of the Whirling Fury seeks to oppose the advance of demonic influences into the Material Plane, while at the same time venerating its patron, the eladrin paragon Gwynharwyf. It keeps its

presence in Sasserine subtle, operating on the theory that to openly oppose such dangerous forces invites open retaliation from the enemy. The church was founded by an elven woman known to the church members only as Lady Silvermane.

Enemies and Allies: The Church opposes all those who would traffic with demons and who would seek to allow demons and their influence to extend into the Material Plane. Evil religions, cabals of conjurers, and demon cultists are viewed with equal contempt. The church is wary of the Witchwardens, as it suspects some of its members of such activity.

Members: The Church of the Whirling Fury is a place of worship for those dedicated to the eladrin paragon Gwynharwyf. Her faithful consist of only a few dozen, and of these only a few know her by her name. Members meet once a month on the night of the new moon to offer prayers and hear Lady Silvermane speak. According to Lady Silvermane, a time will soon come to Sasserine when the people will need protection from themselves and it falls to the faithful of the Whirling Fury to cast aside their secrecy at this time to defend the city.

Secrets: The church's true nature is known to only a few (such as Father Ruphus Laro of the church of St. Cuthbert). A caryatid column is said to guard the church, and rumors of a larger complex below the above-ground structure persist among its lay members.

Type: Temple.

Scale: 3 (small church).

Titles, Benefits, and Duties: Members of the Church of the Whirling Fury are expected to remain silent about the church secrets and to keep their affiliation private except among their most trusted friends and allies. When in Sasserine, they are expected to attend the monthly meetings but eventually all members are expected to leave the city for prolonged periods so they can seek out and oppose demonic intrusions into the world.

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character level	+1/2 PC's level
Worships Gwynharwyf	+2
Base attack bonus of +5 or higher	+1
Base attack bonus of +10 or higher	+2
Is female	+1
Member of champion of Gwynharwyf prestige class	+2
Completes a mission assigned by Lady Silvermane	+2
Defeats a demon in combat (the demon's CR must be equal to or greater than the character's level)	+1/4 demon's CR
Destroy an artifact tied to the Abyss	+4
Makes a pilgrimage to the Court of Stars	+4
Associates with those who consort with demons	-2
Summons a demon to the Material Plane	-10
Is lawful	-2
Is evil	-10
Gains fiendish graft, symbiont, or other boon from a demonic source	-20

Affiliation Score	Title: Benefits and Duties
3 or lower	Not affiliated or junior member with no benefits.
4-10	Ardent Acolyte: The church welcomes you as a faithful member of the congregation.
11-20	Blade Warden: May requisition one portion of protection from evil per month.
21-29	Fury Knight: +1 on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls made against demons. Must defeat a CR 9 demon in single combat to attain this title.
30 or higher	Favored of Gwynharwyf: Gwynharwyf herself has taken note of you, and assigns a ghaele eladrin to you as a guardian angel. This grants you a +1 sacred bonus on all saving throws made against attacks from demons. Up to once a month as a swift action, you may call upon your guardian ghaele eladrin to aid you with one task, but doing so lowers your affiliation score by 4. Must defeat a CR 13 demon in single combat to attain this title.

Dawn Council



Symbol: A red spire rising from an island.

Background, Goals, and Dreams: After emerging from the despotic rule of the Sea Princes, the citizens of Sasserine were reticent to return to the traditional rule under a solitary lord-mayor. Instead, rule of the city fell to seven long-standing noble families,

each representing one of the city's seven districts. The driving goal of the Dawn Council is to see Sasserine return to its glorious roots as a port of call for exotic trade and exploration.

Enemies and Allies: Sasserine has no shortage of enemies. The surrounding swamps are rife with bulwug tribes and other savage humanoids that constantly vex the outlying plantations and farms that support the city. The Scarlet Brotherhood is a traditional enemy of the city as well, yet it has of late been making pretenses of allegiances and truces. The pirates of the Crimson Fleet are another thorn in the Dawn Council's side, and attacks by their ships on merchants and other ships bound for the city seem to be on the rise. The churches of the city are strong supporters of the Dawn Council, assiting with coin and divine might when needed.

Members: The seven noble families that comprise the Dawn Council include the Lidus, the Taskerhills, the Arabanis, the Dracktuses, the Knowlens, the Islarans, and the Lorchesters, yet in truth this affiliation comprises all of the minor nobles, sages, scribes, clerks, and others who help in the daily business of administration of the city. The Sasserine city watch is controlled by the Dawn Council, and the city's churches have much invested in this group as well. Beyond Sasserine's walls, agents of the Dawn Council function as ambassadors, emissaries, missionaries, or even spies.

Secrets: Not all of the noble families of Sasserine have the best interests of the city at heart. In particular, the Dracktus family seems uninterested in representing its district of Shadowshore at council meetings. Emil Dracktus all but stole his position on the Council from the previous title holder, and the other members are often ill at ease in his presence. Whispers that Emil has made secret allegiances with the Scarlet Brotherhood have begun to circulate.

Type: Government.

Scale: 11 (multiregional/duchy).

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character level	+1/2 PC's level
5 or more ranks in Diplomacy	+1/2
10 or more ranks in Diplomacy	+1
Charisma 13 or higher	+1/2
Has the Academy Graduate* feat	+1/2
Wealth	+1/40,000 gp value
Landowner	+1
Marries into a family whose head is an affiliation member	+1
Exposes a plot to harm Sasserine	+1
Saves the life of a member who has an affiliation score of 21 or higher	+2
Is chaotic aligned	-1
Associates with known members of the Scarlet Brotherhood	-2
Found guilty of a minor crime	-2
Found guilty of a major crime	-8
Found guilty of treason	-20

Titles, Benefits, and Duties: Numerous sub-affiliations work within the Dawn Council, ranging from the countless craftsman guilds to the city watch itself. All members are expected to support the city's growth and protect its interests as best they can within the venue of their chosen fields.

Affiliation Score	Title: Benefits and Duties
3 or lower	Not affiliated or junior member with no benefits.
4-10	High Citizen: You are considered a valued citizen of Sasserine.
11-20	Scion of Sasserine: Gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks when representing Dawn Council interests.
21-29	District Councilor: Gain +2 bonus on Will saving throws made against attacks from enemies of Sasserine.
30 or higher	Lord/Lady of Sasserine: The Dawn Council provides you with a small villa in Sasserine or a large plantation; gain a 500 gp/month income and a +2 bonus to your leadership score. Must spend either 1 week a month tending to family issues in Sasserine or pay 1,000 gp for a trusted servant to do so.

Executive Powers: Holiday, Law, Mint.

The Scarlet Brotherhood



Symbol: A four-pointed wavy-armed black cross on a field of red.

Background, Goals, and Dreams:

The Scarlet Brotherhood is a society of fighting monks, rogues, and assassins dedicated to rebuilding the Ancient Suel Empire on the backs of their racial and cultural inferiors.

The Brotherhood traces its history more than a thousand years, when the great human Suloise Empire stood at the zenith of five millennia of cultural accomplishment. The society survived the empire's conflagration in the devastating Rain of Colorless Fire, migrating east across the continent and settling in the forbidding Tilvanot Peninsula. Since that disaster, the Brotherhood has schemed in secret to preserve the culture and way of life of the Suel Imperium. In a recent continental war the Brotherhood struck from the shadows to conquer several maritime nations, including the Sea Princes who once held Sasserine. As a result Brotherhood agents are tolerated—barely—in the city, where they focus on issues of trade and exploration and claim interest in working with—rather than against—the citizens.

Enemies and Allies: Members of the Scarlet Brotherhood present themselves to the outside world as contemplative advisers and martial artists. The organization's monopoly of Oerik's southeastern seas gives them considerable economic influence, and their colonial outposts reach as far as the southwest shores of Hepmonaland and deep into the Vohoun Ocean. Outside their expanding empire their members are considered spies and must live in hiding.

Members: With almost no exceptions, members must be humans of Suel extraction. The Brotherhood occasionally dupes members of other races into acting as their catspaws, but seldom allows those of unpure lineage to join the organization. Members may worship only Suel deities such as Kord and Wee Jas.

Type: Government (racial).

Scale: 16 Multicontinental/empire.

Titles, Benefits, and Duties: Most Brotherhood agents fall into three varieties. Cousins are generally rogues or cut-purses—folk who travel in shadow and who have the social skills necessary to support the Brotherhood's agenda in the outside world. Those who serve primarily to assassinate the enemies of the order are known as uncles and aunts, with elder assassins sometimes called foster uncles or foster aunts. Monks, who form the backbone of the society, are referred to as brothers and sisters or, in the case of elders, fathers and mothers. Other members use military ranks or lesser designations.

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character level	+1/2 PC's level
Purebred Suel	+1
Has the evasion class ability	+1/2
Has the improved evasion class ability	+1/2
Completes assigned mission	+1
Infiltrates an affiliation	+1
Establishes safe house or hidden temple in remote locale	+1
Assassinates known enemy of the Brotherhood	+1/8 creature's CR
Recovers a lost artifact of the Suel Imperium	+2
Is chaotic	-2
Is good	-4
Is responsible for the death of a gang of cousins (see below)	-4
Divulges identities of members or other secrets of the order	-6

Affiliation

Score

Title: Benefits and Duties

3 or lower	Subcitizen: No affiliated or junior member with no benefits.
4-10	Citizen: You are considered a citizen of the Great and Secret Empire of the Scarlet Brotherhood. With the recitation of several lines of doctrine, you must be given safe harbor at any Brotherhood safehouse or enclave. In a settlement with a Brotherhood enclave, you receive a +4 circumstance bonus on Gather Information checks.
15-20	Agent: You may call, with a day's notice, a gang of four cousins (4th-level human rogues) up to three times per year. The cousins serve loyally, even throwing their lives away, at your order. If a total of three complete gangs of cousins dies under your watch, the Brotherhood dispatches an assassin (two levels higher than you) as punishment.
21-29	Elder: Claim audience with the king/emperor/theocrat within 1d6 days once per month.
30 or higher	Father of Obedience: You receive a permanent honor guard of four 8th-level monks who serve you to the death.

Executive Powers: Assassinate, Harvest, Law, Shadow War, Terrorize.

The Seekers



Symbol: Eight triangular plates arrayed in a star pattern around a central circle.

Background, Goals, and Dreams:

This loose-knit society of explorers, adventuring scholars, and fortune hunters scours the world for ancient secrets and lost magic. Though some members claim high-minded goals,

the primary ambition of most Seekers is personal enrichment, and the order is notorious for cutting corners and damning the consequences of their insatiable curiosity and greed. For this reason they remain a secret society, working in the shadows and pooling information to benefit themselves, regardless of the moral or financial cost.

Seeker interaction is based upon the lodge, in which members meet to discuss past and upcoming adventures, share maps, or show off the spoils of the latest expedition. Seeker lodges are often hidden behind a mundane front such as a cartography business or social club, and are renowned for their peerless libraries of Seeker journals and forgotten lore.

Enemies and Allies: Seekers benefit from anonymity, attracting the ire of only those able to follow the subtext of history or trace the wall scrapings of a plundered tomb. Exploration of the southern seas and the jungles of the Amedio coast has also attracted the enmity of the Scarlet Brotherhood, who shares the Seekers' interest in ruined temples and forsaken tombs.

Members: Seekers can come from any race or character class. They must have a driving ambition to discover the lost secrets of the past, and they must be willing to share—to a point—information that could help other Seekers on the path to discovery, illumination, and enrichment. Most members consider themselves scholars of the ancient world, and fluency with languages (including those that fell out of use centuries ago) is considered a mark of pride.

Type: College.

Scale: 14 (continental).

Titles, Benefits, and Duties: Members of the Seekers are expected to support the lodges they visit with a tithe equating roughly 10% of their income. This is an informal system, so a Seeker who routinely donates rare books to a lodge library might be held in higher esteem than one who simply drops a few gold coins into the lockbox. All members are expected to keep an explorer's journal, and to turn over the journal for transcription at least once a month. Upon graduation from apprenticeship, all Seekers receive a silver ring bearing the eight-pointed star symbol of the order. The ring is worth 200 gp, and identifies the wearer as a Seeker. Members are expected not to harm others they know to be Seekers, but mistakes often happen in the field and no one spends a lot of time worrying about those who violate this stricture.

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character level	+1/2 PC's level
Ability to read and write in a "dead" language	+1/2 each
5 or more ranks in Appraise	+1/2
5 or more ranks in Knowledge (geography)	+1/2
5 or more ranks in Knowledge (history)	+1/2
Completes a mission assigned by master Seeker	+1
Donates magic item to Seeker lodge	+1/5,000 gp
Wins crucial lodge debate (opposed Diplomacy check) with rival Seeker	+2
Reveals Seeker secrets to non-member	-2
Loses crucial lodge debate (opposed Diplomacy check) with rival Seeker	-4
Wrecks a ship	-4

Affiliation

Score	Title: Benefits and Duties
3 or lower	Apprentice: Not affiliated or junior member with no benefits.
4–10	Seeker: Seekers receive free room and board from the local Seeker lodge. They receive a +2 circumstance bonus on all Knowledge checks made at the lodge's library.
11–20	Master Seeker: Access to the lodge's secret library grants a +4 bonus on all Knowledge checks made at the lodge. A master receives an unflinchingly loyal apprentice (6th-level human expert) as a personal chronicler and servant.
21–29	Member of the Seeker Council: Access to a lodge's most forbidden tomes, grants the seeker a +8 circumstance bonus on all Knowledge checks made inside the lodge. Members of the council must spend 30 days each year seeing to the affairs of the lodge. The days need not be consecutive. Failure to serve in this capacity results in a -10 penalty to the Seeker's affiliation score.
30 or higher	Grand Master: Once per year, you may borrow for one week any wondrous item with a value of 18,000 gp or less from the lodge's treasure vaults. While you do so, the affiliation takes a -1 penalty to its capital.

Executive Powers: Gift, Research, Trade.

Witchwardens



Symbol: A round disk bearing a circle of runes with eight daggers inside pointing toward the center. Each dagger represents one school of magic, each contributing to the greater cause. Members of the guild typically wear the symbol as a badge on their robes.

Background, Goals, and Dreams: Originally founded 600 years ago as a religious group dedicated to Wee Jas, the goddess of magic, death, and beauty, this guild has become much more secular over the years. Based in the Noble District, the Witchwarden Tower is the primary home of the guild. The 80-foot-tall tower houses numerous libraries, workshops, and meeting halls, all freely available to members, provided that they share their findings and knowledge with the guild. The Witchwardens prefer to keep an air of secrecy about them, requiring all visitors to the tower to first make an appointment and restricting their access to the well-appointed meeting rooms on the first floor.

The first goal of the Witchwardens is the pursuit of arcane magic, and members spend a great deal of their time researching new spells and recovering lost lore. The guild is also charged with the defense of the city against any magical threat. The current mistress of the guild, High Warden Lux Seoni (LN female human wizard 11), takes these responsibilities very seriously; constantly pushing guild members to strike out in new directions with passionate lectures and rallying them to the defense of the city in times of need.

Members: The Witchwardens are open to anyone who can cast arcane magic, including bards, sorcerers, and wizards. While some today still venerate the Witch Goddess, members may be of any faith. Many of the most powerful wizards and sorcerers in the city are members, giving this guild important ties to the powerful and the wealthy.

Type: College.

Scale: 7 (city and outliers).

Affiliation Score Criteria: To join the Witchwardens, you must present yourself for review, where you are required to display your arcane talents in front of a panel of guild leaders. Prospective members must also pay a fee of 20 gp for the review. If you do not pursue arcane magic as your primary focus, you won't derive much benefit from membership.

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character level	+1/2 PC's level
Has the Knack for Magic* feat	+1
5 or more ranks in Knowledge (arcane)	+1
Can cast arcane spells 3rd level or higher	+2
Can cast arcane spells 5th level or higher	+3
Donates magic item valued at 1,000 gp or more to the guild	+1 per item, max three/year
Research or recover a new arcane spell	+1 per spell, max five/year
Member of the Dawn Council affiliation	+2
Member of any other affiliation (except the Dawn Council)	-4/affiliation
Fail to assist Sasserine against a magical threat	-4
Unable to cast an arcane spell	-20

Titles, Benefits, and Duties: Members of the Witchwardens are required to pay a monthly due of 10 gp to cover simple expenses. Members who attain a new title are promoted at the end of the monthly arcane symposium, where they receive their new dagger (a badge of office).

Affiliation Score	Title: Benefits and Duties
3 or lower	No affiliated or applicant with no benefits.
4-10	Initiate: You are recognized as a member of the guild and may use the services of the tower at any time.
11-20	White Dagger: +2 circumstance bonus on Knowledge skill checks made at one of the guild's libraries. Purchase spellcasting from the Witchwardens at 3/4 price (discounting material components).
21-29	Black Dagger: 10% discount on experience point costs when crafting a magic item made with arcane magic. Requisition one potion or scroll containing an arcane spell valued at 1,000 gp or less per month.
30 or higher	Red Dagger: Once per month, you can borrow any wondrous item in the <i>Dungeon Master's Guide</i> of 14,000 gp value or less for 2d4 days. You may not borrow a charged item in this fashion.

Executive Powers: Craft, Gift, Research.

Zelkarune's Horns



Symbol: A dragon skull pierced by a spear makes up the symbol of this organization. Members of the guild typically have this symbol tattooed on their arm or back while others paint it on their shield.

Background, Goals, and Dreams: Made up of barbarians, gladiators, and other skilled warriors, Zelkarune's Horns is a popular organization. Based around the Sasserine Arena in the Champion's District, this group manages and organizes all of its events. In addition, the group also funds numerous hunts and expeditions to gather new creatures for the arena or simply as trophies for the walls of its adjoining hall. Due in large part to its reputation, this group is also the largest mercenary company in all of Sasserine. Members are often hired by noble houses, wealthy individuals, and even other affiliations to take on dangerous tasks.

Members of Zelkarune's Horns pride themselves in their combat prowess, and spend a great deal of their time practicing and sparring with one another. When out on a hunt, members are always on the lookout for some formidable beast to match up against and prove their skill. While many of the bouts and gladiatorial matches hosted by the group are to generate revenue, Zasker Grankus (NG male human barbarian 6/fighter 2), the group's leader, honestly enjoys entertaining the people of Sasserine. Zasker, commonly known as the "reformed barbarian," is a charismatic fellow and able leader. He spends most of his days talking to members about current problems and scheduling upcoming events.

Enemies and Allies: While no other organization considers Zelkarune's Horns its enemy, many of the other more polite groups treat its members with disdain.

Members: Zelkarune's Horns is open to members of any class, although barbarians, fighters, and rangers make up the bulk of the membership. A number of clerics of Kord, monks, and even a few arcane spellcasters can also be found on the roster.

Type: Fighting Company.

Scale: 6 (city).

Affiliation Score Criteria: To join Zelkarune's Horns you must pay an initiation fee of 10 gp and fight one match in the arena (nonlethal, of course). Members of nonmartial classes might find that this affiliation has little to offer them.

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character level	+1/2 PC's level
Has the Arena Blood* feat	+1
Base attack bonus of +5 or higher	+1
Win a fight in the arena (foe's CR must be equal to or greater than the PC's level)	+1, max 2/month
Win 10 consecutive fights in the arena (all foes' CRs must be equal to or greater than the PC's level)	+4, once only
Donate a trophy from a non-humonoid enemy (foes' CRs must be equal to or greater than the PC's level)	+1, max 1/month
Recover a requested live creature for the organization	+2
Lose a fight in the arena	-2
Fail to fight or recover a creature to fight in the arena	-1 per month beyond 3

Titles, Benefits, and Duties: As you advance in Zelkarune's Horns, you are expected to fight greater foes and recover more powerful monsters for the arena. At the same time, you are given special training and a stipend.

Affiliation Score	Title: Benefits and Duties
3 or lower	Not affiliated or junior member with no benefits.
4–11	Pit Boy/Girl: You are a member of the mercenary company and may fight in arena matches, but you are otherwise given terrible chores.
12–22	Scrappers: Purchase nonmagical gear and weapons for 3/4 price, including masterwork items but excluding alchemical items and gear made from special materials. +2 bonus on Intimidate checks made in the city of Sasserine.
23–29	Gladiator: Purchase magic weapons and armor for 3/4 price. You draw a 200 gp/month income so long as you fight in the arena that month.
30 or higher	Arena Champion: Once per month you can take one of the caged monsters (CR 12 or less) with you on an expedition for up to 1 week. The DM decides what monsters are available. These trained beasts obey basic hand signals and can be ordered to follow, stay, attack a target, or guard an area.

Executive Powers: Holiday, Plunder, Raid. 🗡️

by F. Wesley Schneider • illustrated by Andrew Hou

"I am the Ancient, I am the Land. My beginnings are lost in the darkness of the past. I was the warrior, I was good and just. I thundered across the land like the wrath of a just god, but the war years and the killing years wore down my soul as the wind wears stone to sand. All goodness slipped from my life; I found my youth gone, and all I had left was death."

—Count Strahd von Zarovich,

The Tome of Strahd

The Tome of Strahd



So begins the *Tome of Strahd*, autobiography and confession of the infamous Count Strahd von Zarovich. Hidden within the haunted halls of Castle Ravenloft, the *Tome of Strahd* holds revelations intimate not just to one of the most feared villains of all legend, but to the misty realm he both rules and suffers within as captive. Aside from even these mysteries, though, the account details Strahd's first lessons and experiments with necromancy, a morbid art learned from a sinister being he knows only as Death. These first steps down a path of betrayal, fratricide, and immortal frustration are embodied by a number of unique and long forgotten spells. While the rare and dreadful formulae penned within the *Tome of Strahd* are said to number in scores, presented here are but a few of the incantations and related secrets the Dark Powers have allowed to escape the misty borders of Barovia.

BLOODSTONE'S FRIGHTFUL JOINING

Necromancy

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 4

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One undead creature

Duration: 1 hour/level or until you return to your body

Saving Throw: Will negates, see text

Spell Resistance: Yes

Upon casting *Bloodstone's frightful joining* your soul attempts to invade the form of a nearby undead creature, leaving your body lifeless. If the target succeeds at its Will save, it resists your attack and the spell ends. If the creature fails its save, your spirit dominates the target, its own consciousness—if any—being subsumed for the duration of the spell. You gain complete control over the target, even if it was created or controlled by another being. When you

transfer your soul your body appears dead, although a DC 25 Heal check reveals that it is merely in a state of suspended animation.

This spell is blocked by *protection from evil* or similar wards that prevent possession or control.

Once in control of an undead body, you retain your Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, level, class, base attack bonus, base save bonuses, alignment, and mental abilities. The body retains its Strength, Dexterity, hit points, extraordinary abilities, and automatic abilities. A body with extra limbs does not allow you to make more attacks (or more advantageous two-weapon attacks) than normal. You also gain access to the body's extraordinary abilities, but the creature's supernatural abilities, spells, and spell-like abilities do not stay with the body. You gain no access to the target's thoughts or knowledge, but you can choose to communicate with sentient undead mentally.

As a standard action, you can shift freely from your host's body back to your body if within range, thereby returning control of the undead form to its original consciousness or controller. The spell ends when you shift from the target's body to your own body.

If the host body is slain, you return to your body, if within range, and the animating force of the target departs (it is dead). If the host body is slain beyond the range of the spell, both you and the host die. Any life force with nowhere to go is treated as slain.

CURSE OF THE GYPSIES

Necromancy

Level: Bard 2, cleric 2, druid 2, sorcerer/wizard 3

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

Speaking a vehement curse, you mark a target as an enemy of your people and of nature. Choose one of the following three effects:

NEW SPELLS FROM THE TOME OF STRAHD

While the actual *Tome of Strahd* is a unique volume, numerous corruptions and half-legitimate copies have leaked out from Castle Ravenloft. Of these, none contain a wholly accurate account of Strahd's history or a complete collection of the magical formulae within the original. Some rumors even claim that the spells in many of these copies are dangerously incomplete or purposefully misscribed, imperiling any caster who might use them. Regardless, copies with merely the spells presented here are worth upward of 1,900 gp. More dire whispers, though, question how any copies of the tome managed to escape Ravenloft and to what foul end—as it seems unlikely that such secrets could slip from Count Von Zarovich's demesne against his will.

BARD SPELL

2nd-level Bard Spell

Curse of the Gypsies: Afflict a target with bad luck, an invisible mark, or an unnatural aura.

CLERIC SPELLS

2nd-level Cleric Spell

Curse of the Gypsies: Afflict a target with bad luck, an invisible mark, or an unnatural aura.

3rd-level Cleric Spell

Rain of Terror: An unnatural rain makes those within it more susceptible to fear effects.

DRUID SPELLS

2nd-level Druid Spell

Curse of the Gypsies: Afflict a target with bad luck, an invisible mark, or an unnatural aura.

3rd-level Druid Spell

Rain of Terror: An unnatural rain makes those within more susceptible to fear effects.

SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

3rd-level Sorcerer/Wizard Spell

Curse of the Gypsies: Afflict a target with bad luck, an invisible mark, or an unnatural aura.

Rain of Terror: An unnatural rain makes those within it more susceptible to fear effects.

4th-level Sorcerer/Wizard Spell

Bloodstone's Frightful Joining:

Enables possession of an undead creature.

Strahd's Baneful Attractor: Diverts spells from their original target to one of your choosing.

Wraithform: Subject is disguised and can move as a wraith.

Bad Luck: Whenever the target rolls a natural 20 on any roll that requires a 20-sided die, he must reroll, accepting the second result. If the second roll also results in a 20, the target keeps that result. This might prevent the target from being able to score critical hits unless he has a weapon or ability that allows a critical threat to occur on a 19 or lower.

Mark of the Gypsies: A permanent *arcane mark* appears upon the forehead of the target. The mark is invisible to all but members of your group or family. (Who this group consists of is determined by you and the DM, typically being less than one hundred others related by blood or a similarly strong bond.) Anyone who can see the mark immediately recognizes the bearer as cursed and shunned by your people.

Typically, this elicits an attitude two steps lower than an NPC's normal bearing (see page 72 of the *Player's Handbook*) and might provoke open hostility. *Detect magic* or *true seeing* can also reveal this mark, but those who cannot see it naturally must make a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check to discern its meaning. Spells like *erase* cannot remove this mark.

Unnatural Aura: Animals, whether wild or domesticated, can sense the unnatural presence of the target at a distance of 30 feet. They do not willingly approach nearer than that and panic if forced to do so; they remain panicked as long as they are within that range.

The curse bestowed by this spell cannot be dispelled, but it can be removed with a *break enchantment*,



limited wish, miracle, remove curse, or wish spell.

The method of invoking this very rare curse is often not known outside a tightly-knit group. As such, ancient families, druidic circles, and tribes of wandering gypsies—like the Vistani—are most likely to have access to this spell.

RAIN OF TERROR

Necromancy [Fear]

Level: Cleric 3, druid 3, sorcerer/wizard 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 100 ft.

Area: 100-ft.-radius emanation centered on you

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You cause a terrifying, unnatural rain to begin falling from the sky. All creatures other than you within the area of effect take a penalty on Will saving throws made to resist fear effects (like the spell

fear or a dragon's frightful presence). This penalty is equal to -1 per 4 caster levels (to a maximum penalty of -5).

In addition, you gain a $+10$ bonus on Intimidate checks while within the area of effect of the spell.

Rain of terror can manifest in a variety of grotesque and horrifying ways, from torrents of hot blood to a hail of writhing snakes. Regardless of its form, this gruesome rain has all the effects of normal rain, reducing visibility by half, imposing a -4 penalty on ranged attacks, Listen, Spot, and Search checks, and extinguishing flames (automatically dousing unprotected flames and having a 50% chance to snuff protected flames). The animals and effects of this spell are summoned, not illusory, but you have no control over them. Living creatures that rain down are 50% likely to survive. Thus, after a rain of toads, half are alive and hopping around and the other half are dead, killed by the impact. None of these animals are dangers or able to harm anyone, yet their presence is no less unnerving. Roll on the following chart to see how rain of

terror manifests with each casting. If you wish, you can make a DC 20 Concentration check to choose the type of rain (failure results in a random roll).

1d8 Type of Rain

1	Black, putrid water
2	Ash
3	Steaming blood
4	Toads
5	Dead bats
6	Snakes
7	Spiders
8	Reroll for a combination of two rains (ignore any further results of 8)

STRAHD'S BANEFUL ATTRACTOR

Evocation

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One creature

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

You cause spells to divert from their original paths to strike your target. Upon casting this spell, you surround the target with a 15-foot-diameter invisible aura that attracts spells aimed at nearby creatures. Any ranged spell that deals hit point damage and targets a specific creature (such as *disintegrate*, *magic missile*, or *scorching ray*) within 15 feet is diverted to strike the target of this spell instead. The diverted spell strikes the creature affected by *Strahd's baneful attractor*, even if this would cause it to exceed its normal range. The aura of this spell does not pass through barriers that would impede line of effect.

Ranged beneficial spells with a specific target or area-affecting spells (like *fireball*, *flame strike*, or *lightning bolt*) are not affected by *Strahd's baneful attractor*. Potentially harmful spells that don't directly deal hit point damage (like *enervation*, *magic jar*, *silence*, or many enchantment spells) are also not diverted by this spell.

For example, Hennek the sorcerer and Tordek the fighter are standing 10 feet apart when Hennek is affected by *Strahd's baneful attractor*. On the following round, enemies cast *scorching ray*, *magic missile*, *baleful polymorph*, and *ice storm*—all at Tordek. To reach Tordek, all of the spells enter the area affected by the *baneful attractor* surrounding Hennek. As such, the *scorching ray* is diverted and rolls to hit Hennek instead of Tordek and all the *magic missiles* created divert and automatically strike Hennek. *Ice storm*, being an area spell, is unaffected by Hennek's aura, as is *baleful polymorph*, as it deals no hit point damage.

Material Component: A few bits of broken glass.

WRAITHFORM

Transmutation

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 4

Components: S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: One willing corporeal creature touched

Duration: 2 min./level (D)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

Upon casting this spell, your target becomes shadowy and ghostlike, its eyes glowing a sinister red. This spell functions as the spell *gaseous form*, with the exception that the target can move at its normal speed while affected. In addition, mindless undead (those with no Intelligence score) do not perceive the target as a threat. Even those with minds are likely to assume the target is merely a wraith or other vengeful spirit. The target gains a +10 bonus on its Disguise check to appear to be a wraith, although sentient beings may still make Spot checks to see through the morbid disguise.

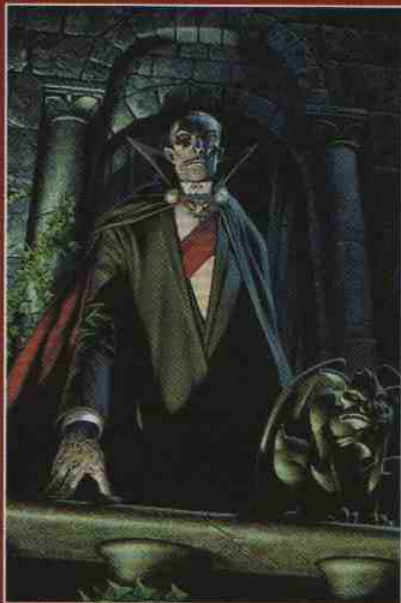
Material Component: A piece of gauze and a wisp of smoke. ☞

EXPEDITION TO CASTLE RAVENLOFT

An Interview with Designers Bruce Cordell and James Wyatt

First published by TSR in 1983, *16: Ravenloft*, an AD&D gothic horror module by Tracy and Laura Hickman, remains one of the most feared and fondly remembered of all DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventures. With its noble and deadly antagonist, Count Strahd Von Zarovich, and a number of plot variations dictated by an in-game fortune-telling session, *Ravenloft's* innovative nature saw the creation of a sequel, 1986's *110: Ravenloft II: The House on Gryphon Hill*; a long-lived campaign setting detailing what lurked beyond Barovia's haunted borders; and a commemorative reprinting in 1999's Silver Anniversary boxed set. This month, all of RAVENLOFT's dread and mystery returns with a new adventure, *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft*.

Fortunately, designers Bruce Cordell and James Wyatt have been kind enough to offer their insight and warnings to any victims who might consider trespassing within Strahd's infamous keep. Suited to



adventurers from 5th to 9th level, Bruce explains that *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft* "is organized such that DMs can run players through the entire module, or

through subsections—so if players come into the adventure at higher than 5th level, there is a place they can begin play. The adventure spans the castle's heights, depths, and exterior, including many surrounding areas, such as the village of Barovia and various other locations."

With a couple of decades' worth of history built up around RAVENLOFT, staying true to plots and details that made the original so popular was a great concern. "This adventure is completely inspired by the Hickmans' original work," Bruce confides. "We're merely updating and expanding, throwing a few new wrinkles and plot points into the mix.... The plot has a similar multifarious aspect—the Deck of RAVENLOFT determines Strahd's underlying motives, much as it did in the original. This one is larger, with more threats, more treasure, and more plot points. But Strahd

TAROKKA AND THE FORTUNES OF RAVENLOFT

The Fortunes of RAVENLOFT section of *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft* presents a detailed encounter in which a fortune-telling session influences the goals of the PC and determines details of the adventure's climax. This reading might be performed in a number of ways, using a *Three-Dragon Ante* deck, tarot cards, or simple playing cards as a prop. RAVENLOFT is well known, however, for having its own variant of the real-world tarot, the tarokka deck. First appearing in the 1992 boxed-set, *Forbidden Lore*, the tarokka deck might be employed in *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft*'s card reading with little preparation.

DMs wishing to use a tarokka deck to perform their fortune-telling should set aside the cards of the high deck (those marked with crowns) except those listed here as focus cards. These five cards correspond to topics the reading is most likely to pertain to. The remaining forty cards should be shuffled as normal. When drawing from the deck, all of the numbers on the tarokka cards correspond to those listed in the Fortunes of Ravenloft section, with the exception of those marked with a "1," which are treated as aces, and the master cards of each suit (those with no number), which are treated as the number "10."

When determining a reading's omen, the suits of the tarokka relate to those of the tarot as follows: coins = cups; glyphs = pentacles; stars = staves; and swords = swords.

Focus Cards

Topic

Strahd
Sunsword
Holy Symbol
Tome of Strahd
Zombies

High Deck

The Darklord
The Artifact
The Raven
The Mists
The Marionette



remains, and all the players dance to his evil will." Speaking of Strahd, many eagerly await the return of Count Von Zarovich, last seen in *DRAGON* #315—returning with a new look from artist Kev Walker—as well as many of RAVENLOFT's other denizens. "Psychologically, [Strahd's] pretty similar. An evil creature slowly losing his mind to an unholy lust to regain his lost love. His stats are updated, of course. If a character appeared in the original, he or she is most likely in this version."

More than just characters and dark plots made the original *Ravenloft* a classic, though. The in-game fortune-telling aspect could change the plot significantly, allowing players to run through the adventure multiple times with wildly differing objectives. "I'd say we used the Fortunes of RAVENLOFT in a slightly more subtle way than the original adventure did," James reflects. "Quite a bit of adventuring can happen before the PCs ever meet Madam Eva

[the gypsy fortune-teller from the original module], so we've encouraged the DM to make some decisions about why Strahd is doing the things he's doing before you get to the fortunes."

Besides just the main cast and general features, *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft* brings with it a host of familiar characters and treasures, all updated and some with significantly more detail. "Ireena, the gypsies, the witches... all these are present, though some have undergone more updating than others," Bruce explains. James goes on to note that some of these additions also rely on well-suited and popular new rules. "We presented an option for the DM and players to treat some of the important magic items in the adventure as legacy items (from *Weapons of Legacy*), which adds an exciting new dimension to the adventure—not only do you need to find them, you need to make them work for you."

While *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft* offers a nostalgic look back, some might wonder if it bodes for greater things and further forays into the Land of Mists or other worlds. Playing things close to the vest, James hints, "we're just getting back into publishing adventures again after a long stretch where we did very few adventures. RAVENLOFT seemed like a great way to revisit the classics while showing off what the latest and greatest incarnation of the rules can accomplish. And it won't be the last stab we make at revisiting some of the classic locales of D&D...."

Finally, both designers offer a bit of advice for those daring to enter the cursed ruins of Castle Ravenloft: "Follow clues. Don't rush straight to the castle. The better prepared you are, the more likely you are to survive," James offers hopefully. Bruce, though, proves a bit more grim: "Get out your garlic garlands and pray, though I doubt Strahd will much care."

OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

This month, the Sage handles a variety of questions related to classes and prestige classes. Send your questions to sageadvice@paizo.com.



Does a dwarf barbarian wearing heavy armor retain the fast movement ability?

No. The class feature only cares about the type of armor you wear (light, medium, or heavy), not whether your speed is actually reduced by the armor. A barbarian wearing heavy armor—whether a dwarf, human, or frost giant—loses the fast movement gained from that class ability.

Can a bard use bardic knowledge anytime a Knowledge skill check called for?

Bardic knowledge is not a substitute for Knowledge checks. The *Player's Handbook* doesn't give a lot of detail about this class feature, indicating only that a bard may make the check "to see whether he knows some relevant information about local notable people, legendary items, or noteworthy places."

By its nature, bardic knowledge represents stray knowledge and random bits remembered from stories, not encyclopedic details. Compare that to the definition of a Knowledge skill, which describes it as "a study of some body of lore, possibly an academic or even scientific discipline." This is a narrow distinction, but one that the DM should keep in mind.

Asking the DM if your bard knows anything about the demon prince Orcus (whose cult the PCs are fighting), or what the local duke's favorite delicacy is, or if there are particularly interesting legends concerning the so-called haunted forest just outside town, are all reasonable uses of bardic knowledge.

Bardic knowledge wouldn't, on the other hand, enable the bard to provide

details regarding a particular demon's vulnerabilities, rattle off a complete list of all the kings and queens who have ruled a particular country, or identify a particular species of fern—all those answers would be more appropriately derived by Knowledge checks.

If the vagueness of bardic knowledge doesn't suit your tastes, the bardic knack variant class feature (*Player's Handbook II*, page 35) provides a much clearer way to mimic a wide range of minor talents and knowledge.

Can my dragon shaman (*Player's Handbook II*, page 11) choose a totem dragon that isn't included on the provided list, such as a shadow dragon or planar dragon?

The list of true dragons provided on page 13 is intended as the only options available in a normal D&D campaign, although DMs wishing to alter this list are, of course, free to do so in their home campaigns.

The Sage recommends against simply creating entries for every true dragon in the game. Not only does that dilute the different "flavors" of dragon shaman by creating too many options, but some dragons don't lend themselves to filling out the various totem-related class features. For example, the shadow dragon from *Draconomicon* doesn't have an energy type associated with its breath weapon, and giving the PC a negative-level-bestowing breath weapon is likely too powerful.

Can a dragon shaman use his touch of vitality (*Player's Handbook II*, page 14) to restore a level lost to energy drain?

No. The touch of vitality can remove a negative level (at a cost of 20 points of healing), but once a negative level has become permanent (that is, resulted in actual level loss), touch of vitality can't help.

How does a multiclassed druid/ranger determine the statistics for her animal companion?

Use the sum of the character's "effective druid level" for the purpose of determining animal companion statistics. A druid's effective level is her class level, while a ranger's is equal to one-half his class level.

A 5th-level druid/6th-level ranger, for example, would have an animal companion as if she were an 8th-level druid (5 plus one-half of 6).

How does the animal companion advance for a druid after she obtains epic levels?

As described in the official errata for the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the animal companion continues to increase in power as the druid gains levels above 20th. "At every three levels higher than 18th (21st, 24th, 27th, and so on), the companion gains +2 bonus Hit Dice, its natural armor increases by +2, its Strength and Dexterity increase by +1, and it learns one additional bonus trick."

Can you clarify the effect of the mettle class feature of the hexblade (*Complete Warrior*)? For example, would the hexblade's mettle work eliminate both the stunning effect and the damage of sound bursts? What about chaos hammer?

Does it differ at all from the mettle ability gained by the pious templar (*Complete Divine*)?

If a character with the mettle class feature succeeds on a Fortitude or Will save against an effect that allows a save to reduce it, the effect is negated instead of merely reduced. Essentially, any saving throw entry of Fortitude half or Fortitude partial becomes "Fortitude negates," while any save entry of Will half or Will partial becomes "Will negates."

A hexblade with mettle who successfully saves against *sound burst* would not only avoid being stunned but would also take no damage from the spell. A successful save against *chaos hammer* would negate the *slow* effect and also negate the damage.

The mettle ability works the same way regardless of the class that grants it.

When a monk reaches 20th level and becomes an outsider, does she stop aging? Does she still die when she reaches the maximum character age or does she live forever?

Outsiders aren't necessarily immortal or ageless, so a 20th-level monk still ages as normal for her race.

Does a paladin who gains a special mount other than a warhorse (such as a hippogriff or unicorn) need to train the creature for combat with the Handle Animal skill, or is the special mount automatically considered combat trained?

According to page 75 in the *Player's Handbook*, you can't use Handle Animal on a creature with an Intelligence higher than 2, so it's impossible for the paladin to use this skill to train her special mount (since her mount typically has an Intelligence of 6 or higher). Instead, such creatures are intelligent enough to follow your commands by normal communication. You don't have to train a creature of this Intelligence for combat; you can simply ask it to do what's needed.

How does the ghost step ability of the ninja (*Complete Adventurer*) work? Does the invisibility effect end if the ninja attacks, like with the *invisibility* spell, or does it continue after an attack, like with the *greater invisibility* spell?

The invisibility granted by the ninja's ghost step class feature lasts until the start of the ninja's next turn, regardless of whether she attacks or not. Thus, it's more like *greater invisibility* than like the normal *invisibility* spell.

Can a soulknife (*Expanded Psionics Handbook*, page 26) with the shape mind blade ability (page 28) create his mind blade as one of the alternative forms, or must he first create it as a short sword and then spend a full-round action to shape it?

When the soulknife spends a move action to create his mind blade, it appears as a short sword regardless of whether he also has the shape mind blade ability. Once created, a soulknife with shape mind blade can then use a full-round action to change the mind blade's shape. He can't initially create it in any other shape.



Does the soulknife's psychic strike ability (*Expanded Psionics Handbook*, page 28) apply separately to both mind blades if he has used shape mind blade to create two short-sword-sized mind blades?

Yes. Each blade is imbued separately with psychic energy (requiring two separate move actions).

If a soulknife with a psychically imbued mind blade uses shape mind blade to separate it into two mind blades, only one (the soulknife's choice) would be so imbued. Similarly, if the soulknife turned his two mind blades back into one, that weapon would be imbued with psychic strike if either of the original weapons were.

When a soulknife uses *bladewind* (*Expanded Psionics Handbook*, page 29) with a mind blade imbued with psychic strike, how many targets take the psychic strike damage?

Only one blade is imbued with psychic strike, so only one target takes the psychic strike damage (chosen by you before you roll the attacks).

Can the warmage (*Complete Arcane*) benefit from the Extra Spell feat?

No. Extra Spell lets you add one spell to your list of spells known, but the spell must be taken from your class spell list. Since the warmage already knows all the spells on his class spell list, this feat has no effect.

Can a wilder (*Expanded Psionics Handbook*) under the effect of *timeless body* use his wild surge ability? If yes, is he still overcome by psychic enervation?

No. A wilder under the effect of *timeless body* "ignores all harmful (and helpful) effects," which would include both the benefit and potential drawback of wild surge.

Does a 1st-level wizard/4th-level rogue with Practiced Spellcaster qualify for a prestige class that requires "Spellcaster level 5th"?

No. This prestige class requirement doesn't refer to your caster level (a value which can be modified by many feats, class features, and even

temporary effects) but to your actual level in a spellcasting class. (If it helps, you can think of this requirement as "Spellcaster, 5th level.")

The same applies for characters whose caster level is less than their class level. A 5th-level paladin meets the "Spellcaster level 5th" requirement, even though her actual caster level is only 2nd.

What can or can't an assassin do while studying a victim for his death attack ability?

The assassin's death attack indicates that he can undertake other actions while studying a target. No specific action is required to maintain the study (for example, it doesn't require concentration), although the class feature lists two rather vague restrictions placed on the three rounds of study. Both of these require DM adjudication.

First, the assassin's attention must remain focused on the target. The assassin has to keep his victim in view, but can perform any other action he wishes (as long as the action doesn't break the second restriction). The assassin could even attack another creature while studying a target!

Second, the target may not detect the assassin or recognize him as a threat. Note that detection isn't limited to vision only; being invisible isn't enough if the target hears the assassin sneaking up behind him. Similarly, if a hidden assassin cast a spell that was overheard or otherwise detected by the victim, the studying would be wasted.

Does the "mysteries/spellcasting" class feature of the child of night and noctumancer prestige classes (*Tome of Magic*, pages 117 and 125) allow you to qualify for access to the initiate or master mysteries?

Yes. The text isn't entirely clear, but the intent is that a character advancing in these prestige classes continues to improve their mystery-casting abilities as if they were advancing as a shadowcaster. ■

Dragon

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MOUNTAIN GHOSTS

Above the tree line, in the deep alpine snows, lies a series of hidden fortresses not found on merchant maps. These eagle's nests are home to a secretive sect of dwarves who work in silence and who always enforce their oaths. Assassins, ninjas, and shadowdancers among the stones, they are the mountain ghosts, dwarven masters of stealth and deception.

Most dwarves are straight-talking, hard-fighting, ale-swilling fellows, the sort who appreciate a stout shield wall or a well-built siege engine. But every society has some black sheep, and among the dwarves, those include the mountain ghosts, a group rightly feared by all sensible people. Unlike many assassins or ninjas, they are not driven by spiritual or arcane

techniques. Instead, they rely on stealth and powerful equipment.

MOUNTAIN GHOST WEAPONS

Mountain ghosts have developed the following new weapons.

DOUBLE AXEHEAD

The mountain ghosts jealously guard their technique in throwing these thin, double-bladed axeheads with no handles. The weapons have better range and damage than simple hand axes.

EXPLODING CROSSBOW BOLTS

These powerful and extremely dangerous alchemical bolts contain reactive agents that explode in a 5-foot radius when they strike. The explosion deals 2d12 points of fire damage. A creature struck by the bolt strikes can make a DC 20 Reflex save for half; those caught in the explosion can make a DC 15 Reflex save to negate the damage.

The formula for exploding crossbow bolts is unknown outside the strongholds of the mountain ghosts, but they are sometimes sold to "reliable" allies for five times the listed cost, typically in small lots of no more than four to six bolts at a time.

Because of their awkward shape and weight, an exploding crossbow bolt can only be fired from a heavy crossbow and its range increment is reduced to 3/4 normal.

GHOST SPIKE

These masterwork shortswords, forged with techniques held secret by the mountain ghost clan, all possess individual names. Each weapon is typically made from silver or cold iron, and its form resembles a short sword with a spike in place of the pommel. Ghost spike names include the Dwarven equivalents of Firetooth, Greyjoy, Whiteheart, and Widow.



NEW WEAPONS

Exotic Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
<i>One-Handed Melee Weapon</i>							
Ghost spike	320 gp	1d4/1d4	1d6/1d6	19–20/x2/x3	—	2 lb.	Piercing
<i>Ranged Weapons</i>							
Blowgun, repeating	100 gp	1d2	1d3	x2	40 ft.	1 lb.	Piercing
Double axehead	30 gp	2d3	2d4	x2	20 ft.	2 lb.	Slashing
Exploding bolt	60 gp	2d12	2d12	—	3/4	2 lb.	Fire
Mountain chain	25 gp	—	—	—	1/2	2 lb.	

NEW ARMOR

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Armor Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure Chance	(30 feet)	—Speed— (20 feet)	Weight
<i>Light armor</i>								
Twisted silk	400 gp	+3	+7	0	5%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb.
<i>Medium armor</i>								
Lead breastplate	200 gp	+5	+3	–4	25%	20 ft.	15 ft.	35 lb.

NEW ALCHEMICAL ITEM

Item	Cost	Weight
Alchemical silence	350 gp	1/2 lb.

A ghost spike is a double weapon. You can fight with it as if fighting with two weapons, but if you do, you incur all the normal attack penalties associated with fighting with two weapons, just as if you were using a one-handed weapon and a light weapon. Both ends deal piercing damage. You can use either head as the primary weapon. The other head is the off-hand weapon.

Ninjas and assassins are automatically proficient with ghost spikes; other classes treat them as exotic weapons.

MOUNTAIN CHAIN

Comprised of three balls linked by stout chain, a mountain chain resembles a set of bolas. You must fire a mountain chain from a light or heavy crossbow. The chain is made in such a way that it can be fired from a normal crossbow without penalty.

You can use this weapon to make a ranged trip attack against an opponent. You can't be tripped during your own trip attempt when using a set of mountain chain. It deals only nonlethal damage.

Because of the mountain chain's awkward shape, a crossbow firing it has its range increment reduced to 1/2 normal.

REPEATING BLOWGUN

This blowgun includes a sliding mechanism that resembles a six-note pan pipe. Each pipe is preloaded with a blowgun dart, allowing the user to fire up to two blowgun darts per round rather than the usual one per round (assuming the user has the ability to make at least two attacks in a round).

The repeating blowgun holds six blowgun darts. As long as it holds darts, you can reload it by pushing the cartridge up as a free action and take a second shot. Loading a new cartridge of six darts requires a full-round action that provokes attacks of opportunity.

You can fire a repeating blowgun with one hand but you can only fire one per round. You must use two hands to load a new cartridge.

ARMOR

Not nearly as nimble as other ninjas, mountain ghosts must rely more readily on armor to see them through a battle.

LEAD-LINED BREASTPLATE

A thin layer of soft lead added to the interior of this breastplate (and often to a skullcap as well) helps protect the mountain ghosts from divinations and mind-affecting enchantments. This armor provides a +1 circumstance bonus on saving throws made to resist such spells.

TWISTED SILK


Rare and valuable, twisted silk armor uses silk wound around strands of mithral to generate protection with very little weight. It superficially resembles a very well made form of padded armor but offers much greater defense. The silk keeps it silent and the twisted strands are surprisingly durable.

ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Not every trick mountain ghosts employ relates to the attack: they possess secret arts of alchemy, healing, and concealment as well.

ALCHEMICAL SILENCE

When applied to boots and armor, this noise-dampening oil provides a +2 alchemical bonus on Move Silently checks. You can throw a flask of alchemical silence as a splash weapon (see *Throw Splash Weapon*, page 158 of the *Player's Handbook*). Treat this attack as a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 10 feet.

A creature struck by a thrown flask of alchemical silence cannot speak louder than a whisper, and indeed some of his words become completely muffled. If thrown on a spellcaster, the target suffers a 20% chance of spell failure when casting any spell with a verbal component for 2 rounds. The creature, however, does gain the benefits of the alchemical silence as detailed above. 

UNFAMILIAR TERRITORY

Every sorcerer gains his spellcasting ability from his breeding. Very few gain their powers from exactly the same source or lineage. Why, then, do all sorcerers gain familiars? This article presents a couple of variant class features appropriate to any class with the familiar class feature.

ARCAN REABSORPTION

You have always focused more on the raw manipulation of arcane energy than others of your profession. As such, you know how to

possibly regain that energy when outside forces attempt to disrupt your magic.

Level: 1st (4th for hexblades).

Replaces: If you select this class feature, you do not gain a familiar.

Benefit: Whenever a targeted spell you cast fails to penetrate a creature's spell resistance or is countered by another spellcaster, you can immediately attempt to reabsorb the arcane energy you just spent as an immediate action. The spell can have no effect at all in order to use this ability. By making a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + [spell level $\times 3$]), you regain the spell as if it was never cast (or regain the spell slot if you cast spells spontaneously). Attempting this taxes your body. Regardless of the success of the check, you take 1 point of nonlethal damage per spell level you attempt to reabsorb. This damage is internal and bypasses damage reduction and resistances you possess.

FOCUS CASTER

A familiar offers companionship and, when necessary, an effective scout or spy. It does little for your spellcasting, however. This option presents you with a less generally useful item that instead enhances your spellcasting in some way.

Level: 1st (4th for hexblades).

Replaces: If you select this class feature, you do not gain a familiar.

Benefit: Instead of a familiar, you bind yourself to a masterwork item that acts as a focus for all your spells and that enhances the power of spells of one school. Once you have a masterwork item to bind to, you must perform a ritual that requires 24 hours and reagents costing 100 gp, much as if you were summoning a familiar.

When casting any spell, you must hold, wield, or wear this item (as appropriate), in addition to providing the normal components of the spell (even other foci). Your focus item is used in addition to the spell's normal components, not instead of. You are



automatically considered proficient with your focus item, but you do not gain proficiency with any other item (weapon or armor) of the same type. For example, if your focus item is a longsword, you are proficient with your focus longsword but not with any other longsword, unless of course another feat or class feature grants you proficiency. When you cast a spell from the school to which your focus belongs, that spell is enhanced. At 7th and 15th levels, your focus grants additional abilities.

You may have only one focus item at a time. A specialist wizard may select only the focus appropriate to her specialty school. Bonuses gained from a focus item stack with similar bonuses gained from feats such as Spell Focus or Spell Penetration.

Your focus item grows tougher as you advance in level. The hardness of your focus item increases by one-half your caster level, up to double its normal hardness. In addition, your focus item gains additional hit points equal to your caster level, up to double its normal number of hit points. These bonuses are in addition to any increase in hardness or hit points the item gains for being made into a magic item.

If your focus item can be enhanced with magic, it costs you less XP to do so. When determining your XP cost for making your focus item into a magic item (or for upgrading it later), reduce the base cost by 10%. This reduction stacks with any other reduction you might gain, such as from the Legendary Artisan feat (see *EBERRON Campaign Setting*, page 56). Another character enhancing your focus item does not gain this reduction in XP cost.

If your focus item is destroyed, you must bind yourself to another masterwork item. You cannot bind to an item that is already a magic item. You can only bind to masterwork items. The item can be made of special materials (such as adamantine, cold iron, or darkwood).

The following items are typical foci for each of the standard schools.

Abjuration: Usually a set of bracers, a buckler, or a small shield (wooden or steel), your focus grants any nonper-

sonal abjuration spell you cast with one or more targets one additional target. The additional target is affected by the spell for half the normal duration. At 7th level, the additional targets of your spells receive them for the full duration. At 15th level, you may cast any personal abjuration spell as a touch spell.

Conjuration: Usually a gnarled and twisted quarterstaff or other polearm, your focus increases the duration of any conjuration spell you cast by +1 round (including spells that require concentration). Spells that require concentration also continue for +1 extra round after you stop concentrating. At 7th level, the duration bonuses each increase by +2 rounds. At 15th level, the duration bonuses each increase by +3 rounds.

Divination: Usually a large crystal (loose or mounted on a rod or staff) or ornate holy symbol, your focus increases the caster level of any divination spell you cast by +1. At 7th level, the duration of any divination spell you cast doubles. At 15th level, you gain a bonus to resist divinations equal to 1 + your Intelligence modifier (minimum +1).


Enchantment: Usually an ornate and typically nonfunctional piece of clothing, such as a sash or a hair ribbon, your focus increases the duration of any enchantment spell you cast by 1 round (including spells that require concentration). Spells that require concentration also continue for +1 extra round after you stop concentrating. At 7th level, the duration bonuses each increase by +2 rounds. At 15th level, the DC of your enchantment spells increases by +2.

Evocation: Usually a bladed weapon, such as a longsword or dagger, your focus grants +1 point of damage to any evocation spell you cast. Non-area effect spells that allow multiple targets (such as *magic missile*) only deal the bonus damage to a single target of your choice. For example, a *fireball* spell cast by a 6th-level sorcerer with this focus deals 6d6+1 points of damage to all creatures caught within it, while a *magic missile* spell cast by the same sorcerer creates three missiles: two that deal 1d4+1 points of damage

and one that deals 1d4+2 points of damage. At 7th level, evocation spells you cast ignore the first 5 points of any energy or elemental resistances that a creature may have. Immunities are not affected. At 15th level, you may, once per day, ignore a creature's immunity when you cast an evocation spell that affects it.

Illusion: Usually a mask, shroud, cloak, or similar concealing piece of clothing, your focus increases the caster level of illusion spells you cast by +1. At 7th level, for every illusion spell you cast you gain a bonus on caster level checks made to defeat spell resistance equal to half your caster level. At 15th level, you may cast any personal illusion spell as a touch spell.


Necromancy: Usually a flail, kama, sickle, scythe, or other weapon derived from harvesting crops, your focus increases the range of any necromancy spell you cast by +25%. At 7th level, any necromancy spell you cast that deals ability damage, ability drain, or directly assigns a penalty to an ability score deals +1 point of ability damage or ability drain or increases the penalty by an additional -1. For example, a 12th-level necromancer who casts *ray of enfeeblement* bestows a Strength penalty of 1d6+6 instead of the normal 1d6+5. At 15th level, any living creature affected by a necromancy spell you cast and fails the Fortitude save against it also becomes fatigued.

Transmutation: Usually a piece of equipment or set of tools used to create something (such as thieves' tools, a musical instrument, or artisan's tools), your focus grants any nonpersonal transmutation spell you cast with one or more targets one additional target. The additional target is affected by the spell for half the normal duration. At 7th level, the additional targets of your spells receive them for the full duration. At 15th level, once per day, a transmutation spell you cast that grants a bonus to ability scores doubles the bonus. For example, a *bull's strength* spell grants a +8 bonus to Strength instead of the normal +4. 

WILD SHAPE GUIDE

Few class abilities are as versatile—or as powerful—as a druid's wild shape. Whether you need to act as a front-line fighter, fly to the top of a cliff, dig a large hole, or sneak into an enemy encampment unnoticed, wild shape can provide you with the perfect form to accomplish all these tasks and more. That flexibility and power comes at a cost, though. Finding the right animal form for the task at hand requires research. The following list presents all the valid forms of a druid's

wild shape from the *Monster Manual* (excluding elementals).

Using the List: The list presents information in the following order: the creature's total Hit Dice, its speed in feet (an unlabeled number is its base land speed, "B" indicates a burrow speed, "C" indicates a climb speed, "F" indicates a fly speed—followed by "A" for average maneuverability and "G" for good maneuverability—and "S" indicates a swim speed), pertinent ability scores, and the amount of natural armor the creature has. 

WILD SHAPE ERRATA

Recently, Wizards of the Coast released extensive errata regarding the *polymorph* chain of spells and abilities (see wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/er/20040125a), including the druid's wild shape ability. This ability has been divorced from the *polymorph* spell chain and now functions based upon the alternate form ability, found on page 305 of the *Monster Manual*. Here's a brief summary of how the errata affects the druid's signature class ability.

- Whenever you assume a new form, you regain hit points as though you had rested for a night.
- Any gear worn by the druid melds into her new form, even if that form could wear the item. Items donned while the druid is in animal form fall off and land at her feet when she resumes her own form.
- You cannot transform into a creature with a template.
- If the new form has the aquatic subtype, the druid gains it in the new form.
- Changes to Constitution do not alter the druid's hit points.

To get all the information about this change, you'll need to download the errata files for both the *Player's Handbook* and *Monster Manual*.



ANIMALS AND PLANTS

Natural
Creature **HD** **Speed** **Str** **Dex** **Con** **Armor**

Small and Medium Creatures

Baboon	1	40, C 30	15	14	12	+3
Badger	1	30, B 10	8	17	15	+1
Bear, black	3	40	19	13	15	+2
Boar	3	40	15	10	17	+6
Cheetah	3	50	16	19	15	+1
Crocodile	3	20, S 30	19	12	17	+4
Dire badger	3	30, B 10	14	17	19	+3
Dire rat	1	40, C 20	10	17	12	+1
Dire weasel	3	40	14	19	10	+2
Dog	1	40	13	17	15	+1
Dog, riding	2	40	15	15	15	+4
Donkey	2	30	10	13	12	+2
Eagle	1	10, F 80 (A)	10	15	12	+1
Hyena	2	50	14	15	15	+2
Leopard	3	40, C 20	16	19	15	+1
Lizard, monitor	3	30, S 30	17	15	17	+3
Octopus	2	20, S 30	12	17	11	+2
Pony	2	40	13	13	12	+2
Pony, war	2	40	15	13	14	+2
Porpoise	2	S 80	11	17	13	+2
Shark, Medium	3	S 60	13	15	13	+3
Snake, constrictor	3	20, C 20, S 20	17	17	13	+2
Snake, Small viper	1	20, C 20, S 20	6	17	11	+3
Snake, Medium viper	2	20, C 20, S 20	8	17	11	+3
Squid	3	S 60	14	17	11	+3
Wolf	2	50	13	15	15	+2
Wolverine	3	30, B 10, C 10	14	15	19	+2

Large Creatures

Ape	4	30, C 30	21	15	14	+3
Bear, brown	6	40	27	13	19	+2
Bear, polar	8	40, S 30	27	13	19	+5
Bison	5	40	22	10	16	+4
Camel	3	50	18	16	14	+1
Dinosaur, deinonychus	4	60	19	15	19	+5
Dire ape	5	30, C 15	22	15	14	+4
Dire bat	4	20, F 40 (G)	17	22	17	+5
Dire bear	12	40	31	13	19	+7
Dire boar	7	40	27	10	17	+6
Dire lion	8	40	25	15	17	+4
Dire tiger	16	40	27	15	17	+6
Dire wolf	6	50	25	15	17	+3
Dire wolverine	5	30, C 10	22	17	19	+4
Horse, heavy	3	50	16	13	15	+3
Horse, light	3	60	14	13	15	+3

Natural
Creature **HD** **Speed** **Str** **Dex** **Con** **Armor**

Warhorse, heavy	4	50	18	13	17	+4
Warhorse, light	3	60	16	13	17	+4
Lion	5	40	21	17	15	+3
Manta ray	3	S 30	16	11	10	+3
Mule	3	30	16	13	17	+3
Octopus, giant	8	S 30	20	15	13	+7
Rhinoceros	8	30	26	10	21	+7
Shark, Large	7	S 60	17	15	13	+4
Snake, Large viper	3	20, C 20, S 20	10	17	11	+3
Tiger	6	40	23	15	17	+3

Tiny Creatures

Cat	1/2	30	3	15	10	—
Hawk	1	10, F 60 (A)	6	17	10	+2
Monkey	1	30, C 30	3	15	10	—
Owl	1	10, F 40 (A)	4	17	10	+2
Rat	1/4	15, C 15, S 15	2	15	10	—
Raven	1/4	10, F 40 (A)	1	15	10	—
Snake, Tiny viper	1/4	15, C 15, S 15	4	17	11	+2
Weasel	1/2	20, C 20	3	15	10	+2

Plant

Assassin vine	4	5	20	10	16	+6
Fungus, shrieker	2	0	—	—	13	+3
Fungus, violet fungus	2	10	14	8	16	+4
Phantom fungus	2	20	14	10	16	+4
Shambling mound	8	20, S 20	21	10	17	+11
Tendriculos	9	20	28	9	22	+9
Treant	7	30	29	8	21	+13

Huge Creatures

Crocodile, giant	7	20, S 30	27	12	19	+7
Dinosaur, elasmosaurus	10	20, S 50	26	14	22	+3
Dinosaur, megaraptor	8	60	21	15	21	+6
Dinosaur, triceratops	16	30	30	9	25	+11
Dinosaur, tyrannosaurus	18	40	28	12	21	+5
Dire shark	18	S 60	23	15	17	+7
Elephant	11	40	30	10	21	+7
Shark, Huge	10	S 60	21	15	15	+5
Snake, Huge viper	6	20, C 20, S 20	16	15	13	+5
Squid, giant	12	S 80	26	17	13	+6
Whale, orca	9	S 50	27	15	21	+6

MARSHAL OF BATTLE



The marshal, from *Miniatures Handbook*, is a fighting class that focuses on leading others in battle, granting benefits to those around him through the use of auras. *Heroes of Battle*, which guides players and DMs through large-scale battles in D&D, presents a new kind of aura to the game: commander auras. Commander auras do not take into account marshal auras, but *Heroes of Battle* (page 76) encourages DMs to evaluate the marshal's auras and update them accordingly. The following optional adjustments to the marshal class make it compatible with *Heroes of Battle*.

CLASS SKILLS

Add Profession (siege engineer) to the marshal's class skill list. Marshals often lead siege engine crews (*Heroes of Battle*, 63–67).

AURAS (EX)

The marshal's main class feature is his arsenal of auras, and a marshal has a significant advantage over nonmarshals when using battlefield auras. A nonmarshal commander can only have one aura at a time, and his range is limited to 30 feet. A marshal's auras affect all allies with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher within 60 feet, and the marshal knows a number of auras equal to half his level (although he may only project one aura at a time, activating it as a swift action).

Beginning at 7th level, a marshal may project two auras simultaneously. Beginning at 14th level, the marshal may project his auras up to 90 feet. At 20th level, the marshal may project auras 120 feet and may have up to three auras active.

A marshal must meet all the prerequisites of the aura he wishes to learn. Allies must be able to hear and see a marshal to gain the effects of his auras, even if within range. In addition, except where otherwise noted herein, all the rules for auras presented in *Heroes of Battle* (pages 75–76) apply.

The following additional auras represent an integration of the auras from the *Miniatures Handbook* into the *Heroes of Battle* aura system. Any character wishing to use these auras, whether marshal or commander, must meet all of the aura's prerequisites to gain it.

Note: The specification of minor aura or major aura from the marshal's original class description do not apply to this variant.

ARTFUL COMMANDER

Your troops are skilled at using unusual combat maneuvers.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 2, chaotic alignment.

Benefit: Allies within your aura range gain a +1 morale bonus on bull rush, disarm, sunder, and trip attempts.

BRAWLING COMMANDER

The troops under your command are especially effective at unarmed combat.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 1, Improved Unarmed Combat.

Benefit: Allies within your aura range gain a +1 morale bonus on unarmed attack rolls and a +1 morale bonus on damage rolls when dealing nonlethal damage.

CAVALRY COMMANDER

You are especially adept at leading mounted troops in battle.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 1, Ride 5 ranks, Mounted Combat.

Benefit: Allies within your aura range gain a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls and on Ride checks when mounted.

CHARIOTTEER COMMANDER

You are especially skilled at leading war vehicles into battle.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 2, Handle Animal 5 ranks, Profession (teamster) 5 ranks.

Benefit: Allies within your aura range gain a +1 morale bonus on Profession (teamster) skill checks and a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls made while crewing a chariot or wheeled war vehicle.

GUARD COMMANDER

You have learned to effectively lead troops assigned to guard details.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 1, Listen 5 ranks or Spot 5 ranks.

Benefit: Allies within your aura range gain a +1 morale bonus on Listen and Spot checks.

GUERRILLA COMMANDER

You are an effective leader of formations of unconventional troops, striking in the darkness and with total silence.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 3, chaotic alignment, and +1d6 sneak attack or Blind-Fight.

Benefit: You can communicate your orders and commands to your allies within your aura range undetectably, using projected whispers, body language, and hand signals.

HARDY COMMANDER

You inspire your troops to ignore wounds from enemies.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 3, barbarian class or Toughness.

Benefit: Allies within your aura range gain DR 1/—.

INSPIRING COMMANDER

You bring out the best in your troops.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 3, Diplomacy 5 ranks or Intimidate 5 ranks.

Benefit: Allies within your aura range gain a +1 morale bonus on all ability checks and initiative rolls.

NAVAL COMMANDER

You are especially skilled at commanding ships in battle.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 3, Profession (sailor) 5 ranks.

Benefit: Allies within your aura range gain a +3 morale bonus on Profession (sailor) and Survival checks made to navigate when at sea.

PICKET COMMANDER

You are an effective commander of soldiers assigned to picket lines.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 3, Hide 5 ranks, Move Silently 5 ranks.

Benefit: Allies within your aura range gain a +2 morale bonus on Move Silently and Hide checks.

RAMPART COMMANDER

You are especially effective at leading men in defending and besieging walls.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 3, Climb 5 ranks.

Benefit: Allies within your aura range gain a +1 morale bonus on Climb checks and a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls made while fighting against opponents on higher ground or lower ground.

SIEGE COMMANDER

You are a capable commander of siege engines and their crews.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 1, Profession (siege engineer) 5 ranks.

Benefit: Allies within your aura range gain a +1 morale bonus on Profession (siege engineer) checks.

VOLLEY COMMANDER

Your archers are particularly effective at volley firing.

Prerequisites: Commander rating 2, lawful alignment, Far Shot, Point-Blank Shot.

Benefit: Allies within your aura range who make volley of arrow attacks (*Heroes of Battle*, 68–69) increase the DC of their attacks by +1 and the attacks deal +1 extra point of damage per archer firing the volley.


COMMANDERS

First introduced in the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* game, commanders and commander ratings came to D&D in *Heroes of Battle* (page 75).

Any character with a rank higher than private (or its fantasy equivalent) has a commander rating. *Heroes of Battle* has more information about ranks and their effects on a campaign. The commander rating affects units the character commands.

More importantly for a more typical D&D game, a commander radiates an aura not unlike the auras of a marshal. As a character's commander rating improves, he gains access to more powerful commander auras. Despite being a reward for military rank, these auras are beneficial to almost any group of adventurers (or, in the hands of NPC enemies, to the foes the PCs face).

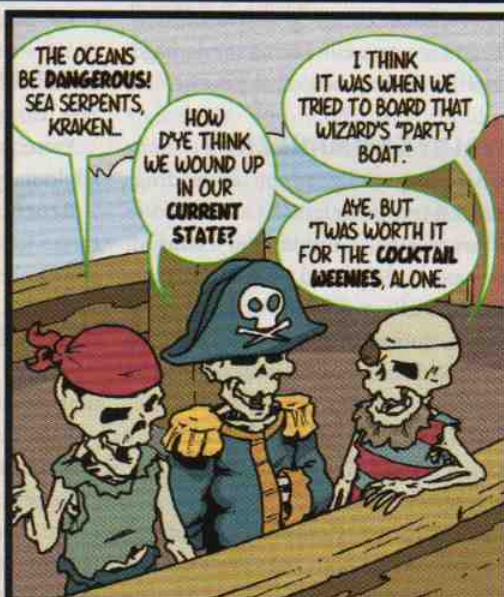
A commander aura typically has a range of 30 feet, and characters can benefit from more than one commander aura simultaneously (although commander aura benefits never stack).

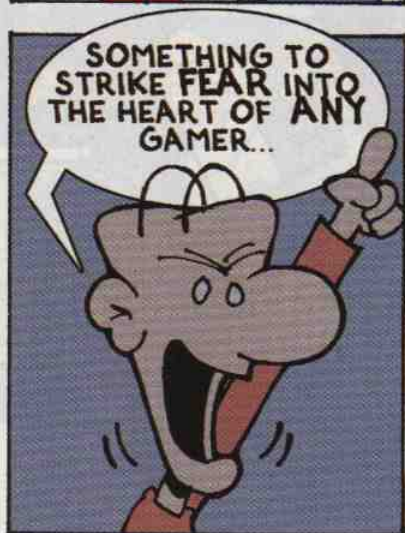
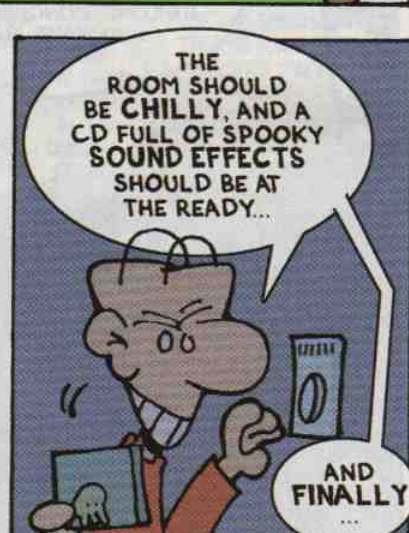
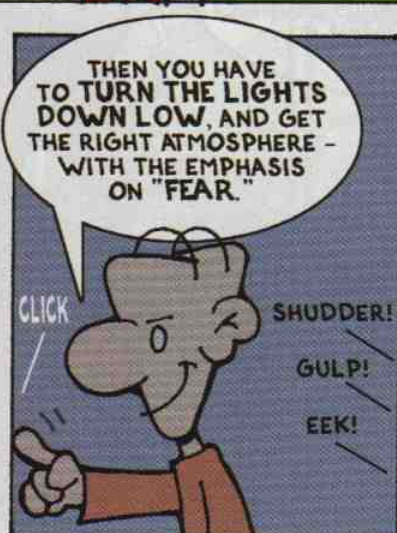
When a character gains rank 1 (corporal or its equivalent), he may select his first aura. Each time his rank improves, he can replace his aura. A nonmarshal character can never have more than one aura. 

Nodwick

by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com

"Every normal man must be tempted, at times, to spit on his hands, hoist the black flag, and begin slitting throats." - H.L. Mencken



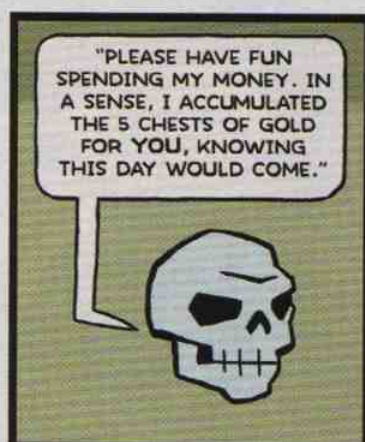


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Panel 1: A wizard and a dwarf are playing cards on a table. The wizard is holding a hand of cards, and the dwarf is also holding cards. There are gold coins on the table.

Panel 2: The wizard says, "Ver bluffin'." The dwarf replies, "You're entitled to that opinion, I suppose. If you think I am."

Panel 3: The wizard is looking at his cards, and the dwarf is also looking at his cards. The wizard says, "So, uh, any chance you're gonna—"

Panel 4: The dwarf says, "Call." The wizard looks nervous.

Panel 5: The wizard says, "HA! Read 'em and weep salty dwarven tears of pain, loser!" The dwarf replies, "Full house!"

Panel 6: The wizard says, "Thor's elbow! I've only got a pair of kings." The dwarf looks smug.

Panel 7: The wizard says, "Hey genius, Bluff isn't even one of my class skills!" The dwarf replies, "Och, I keep forgettin' yer a ranger, not a rogue..."

Panel 8: The wizard looks defeated. The dwarf says, "So, go again?" The wizard replies, "Aye, I needta win back me offerin' ta Thor."

Panel 9: The wizard is looking at his cards, and the dwarf is also looking at his cards. The wizard says, "Let's see, the wizard's familiar just gated in a demon, so that would make it...uh..."

Panel 10: The wizard says, "Initiative 12?" The dwarf replies, "No, 13." The wizard replies, "OK, 13."

Panel 11: The wizard says, "They haven't even made it down to single digits yet." The dwarf replies, "So, uh, my Initiative total is -1...?"

Panel 12: The wizard says, "Darn it! Me Dex penalty be drivin' me ta bankruptcy!" The dwarf replies, "Sit down and ante up."

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